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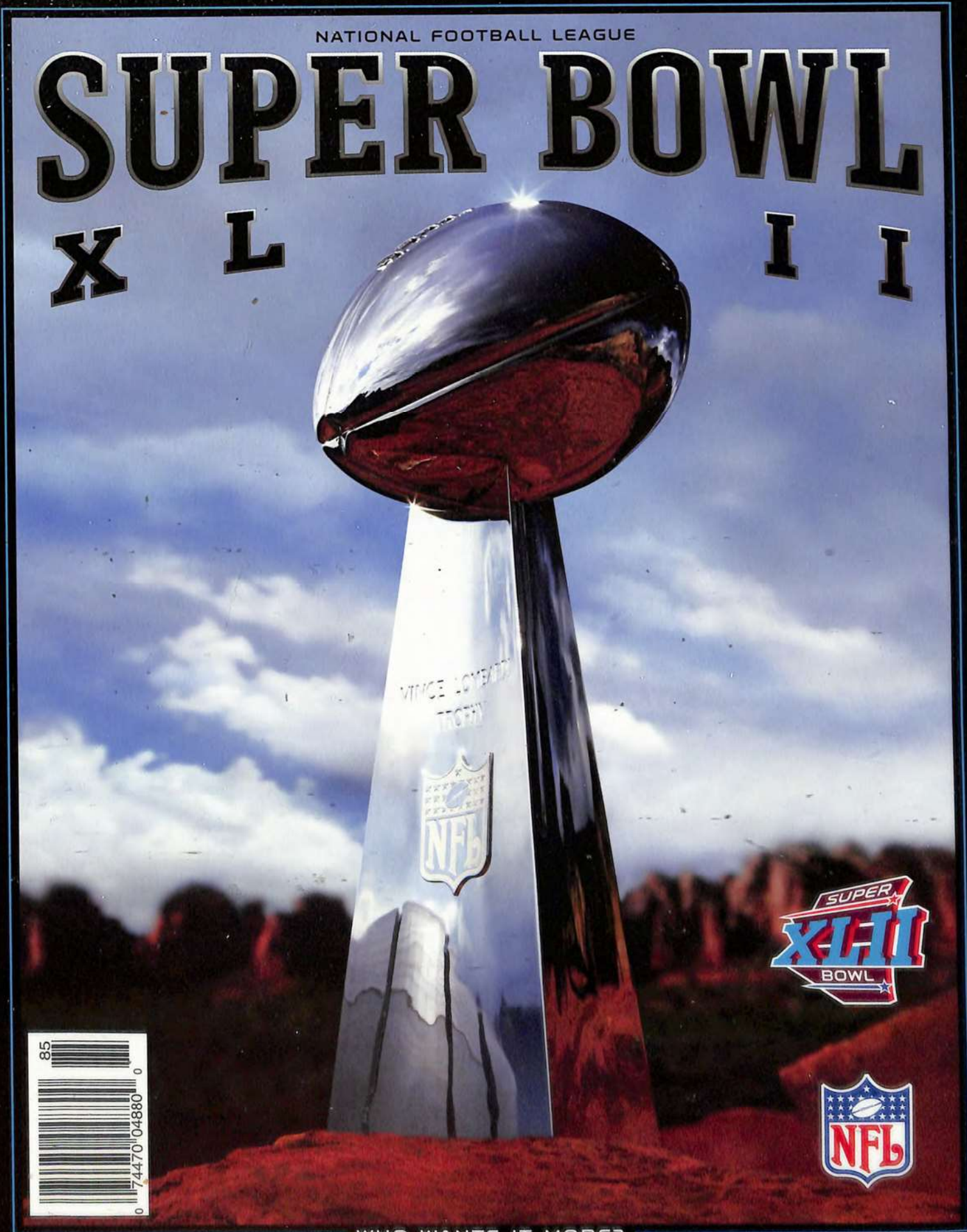

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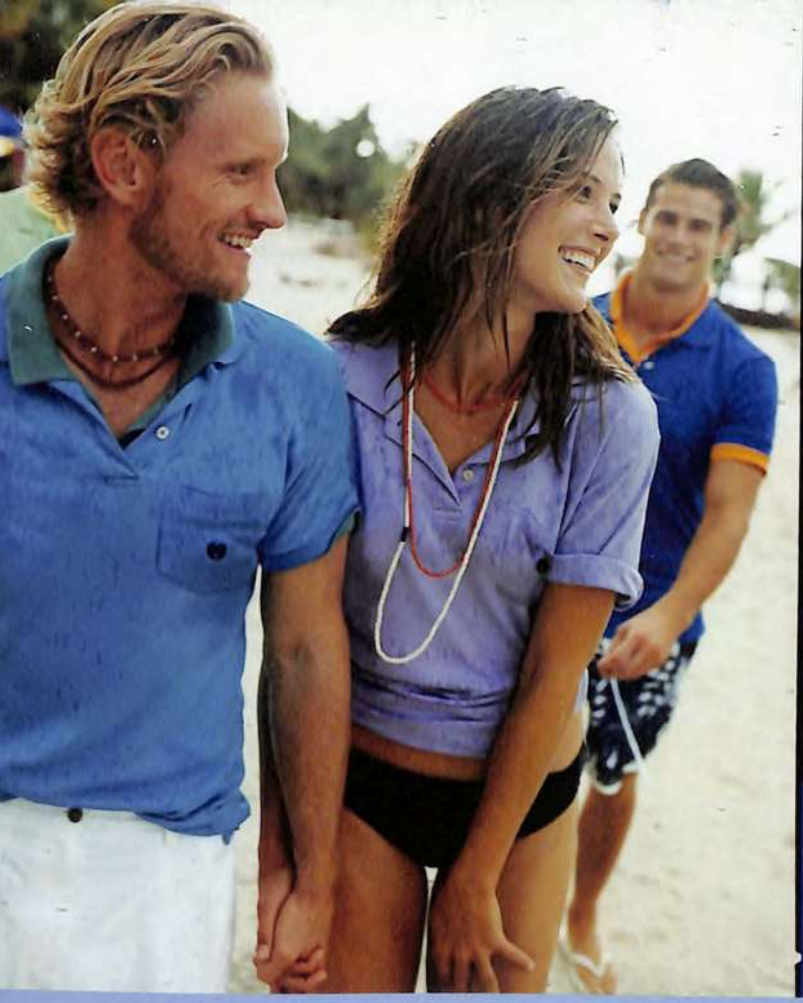

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** Based on 2008 EPA fuel economy estimates of 21 MPG city.
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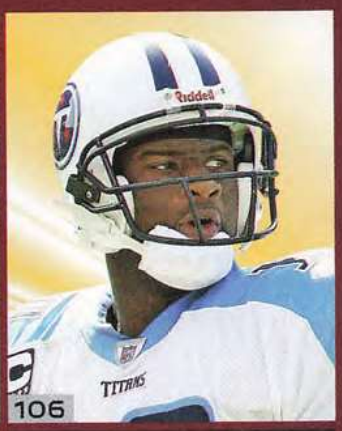

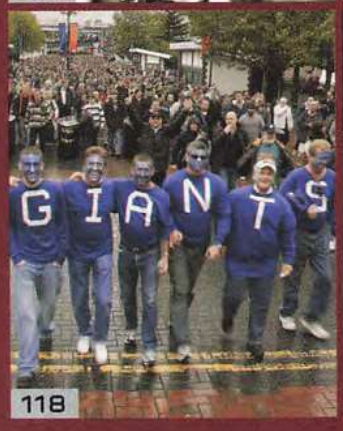

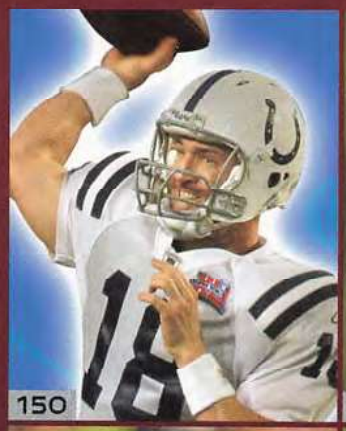

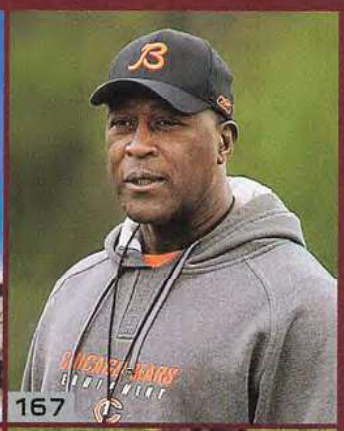

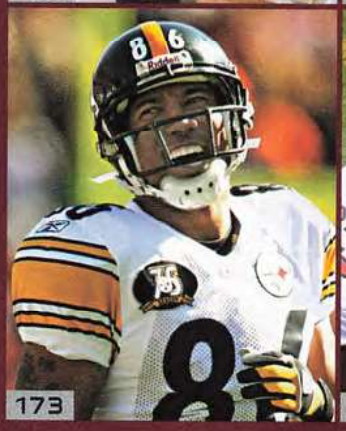

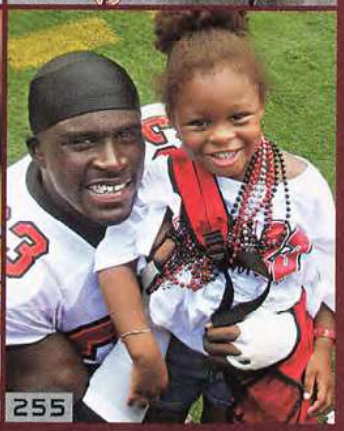

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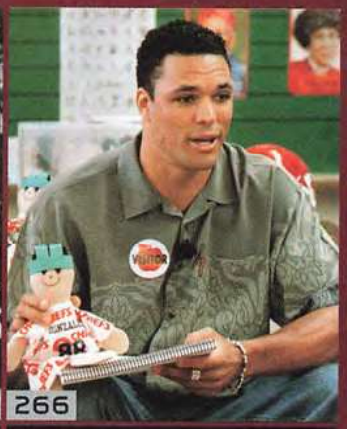

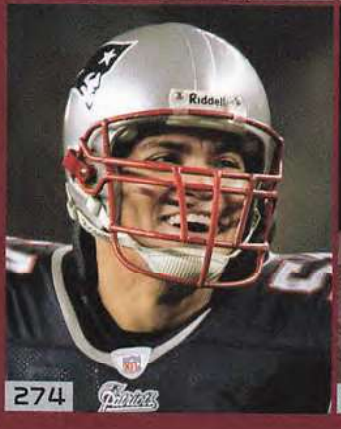

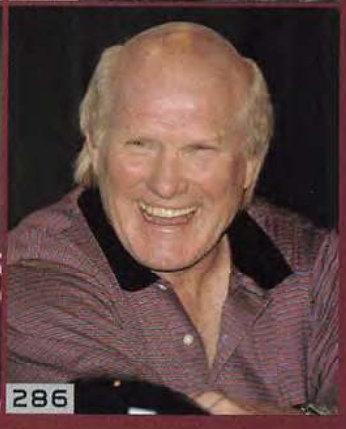

NFL Publishing
280 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10017
(212) 450-2000
www.nfl.com

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Senior Editor, NFL.com/NFL Publishing
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Super Bowl XLII Game Program
University of Phoenix Stadium
February 3, 2008

Published for the NFL by
H.● ZIMMAN, Inc.

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Printed in the USA by Quad/Graphics

Publisher
Joshua A. Zimman

Associate Publisher
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Graphic Production
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The Vince Lombardi Trophy photographed in Sedona, Arizona by Nigel Parry.

Art direction and cover design by Shandon Melvin, National Football League.

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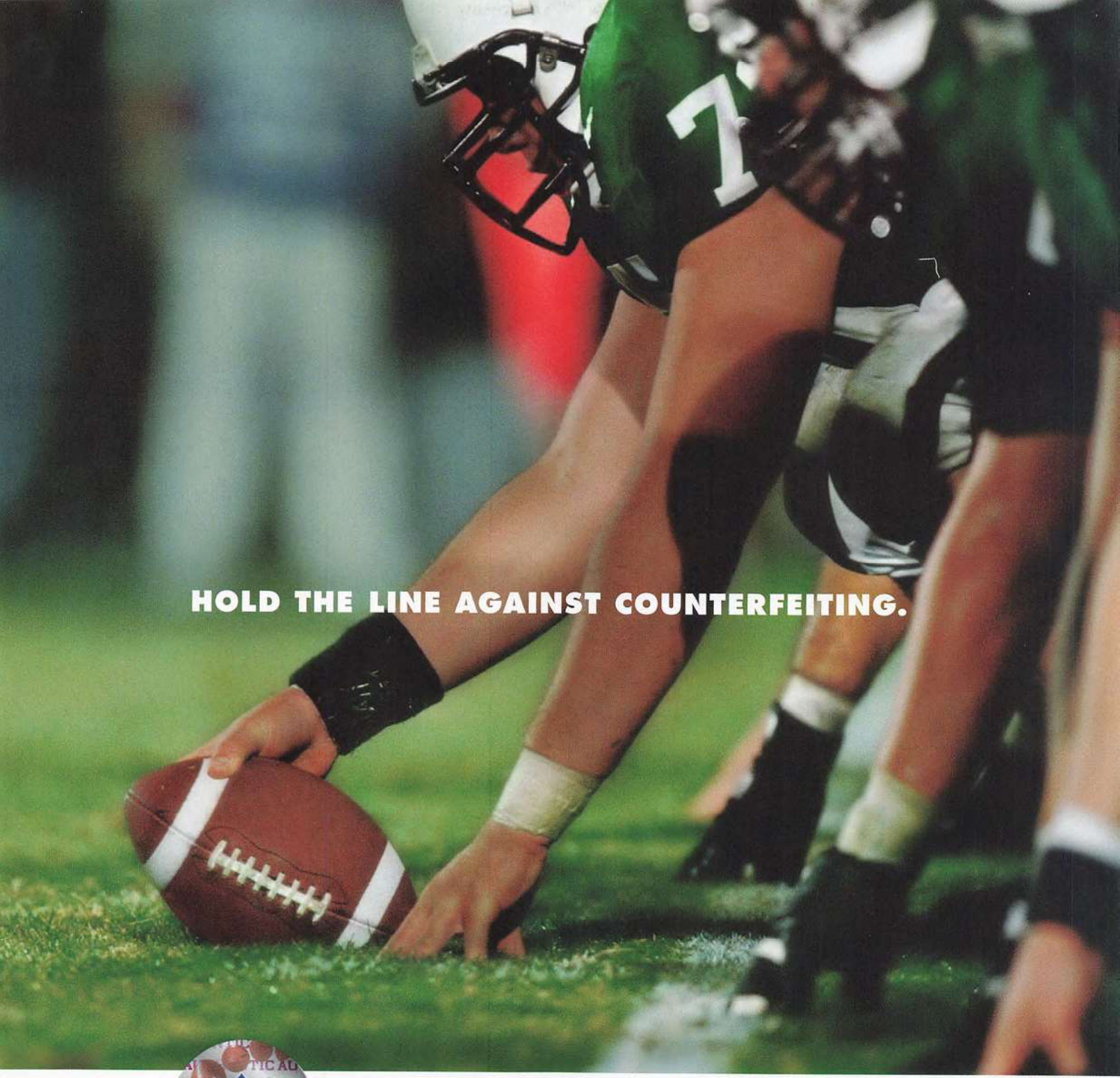

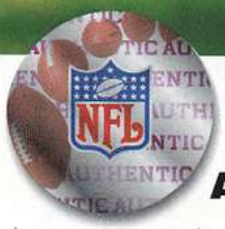

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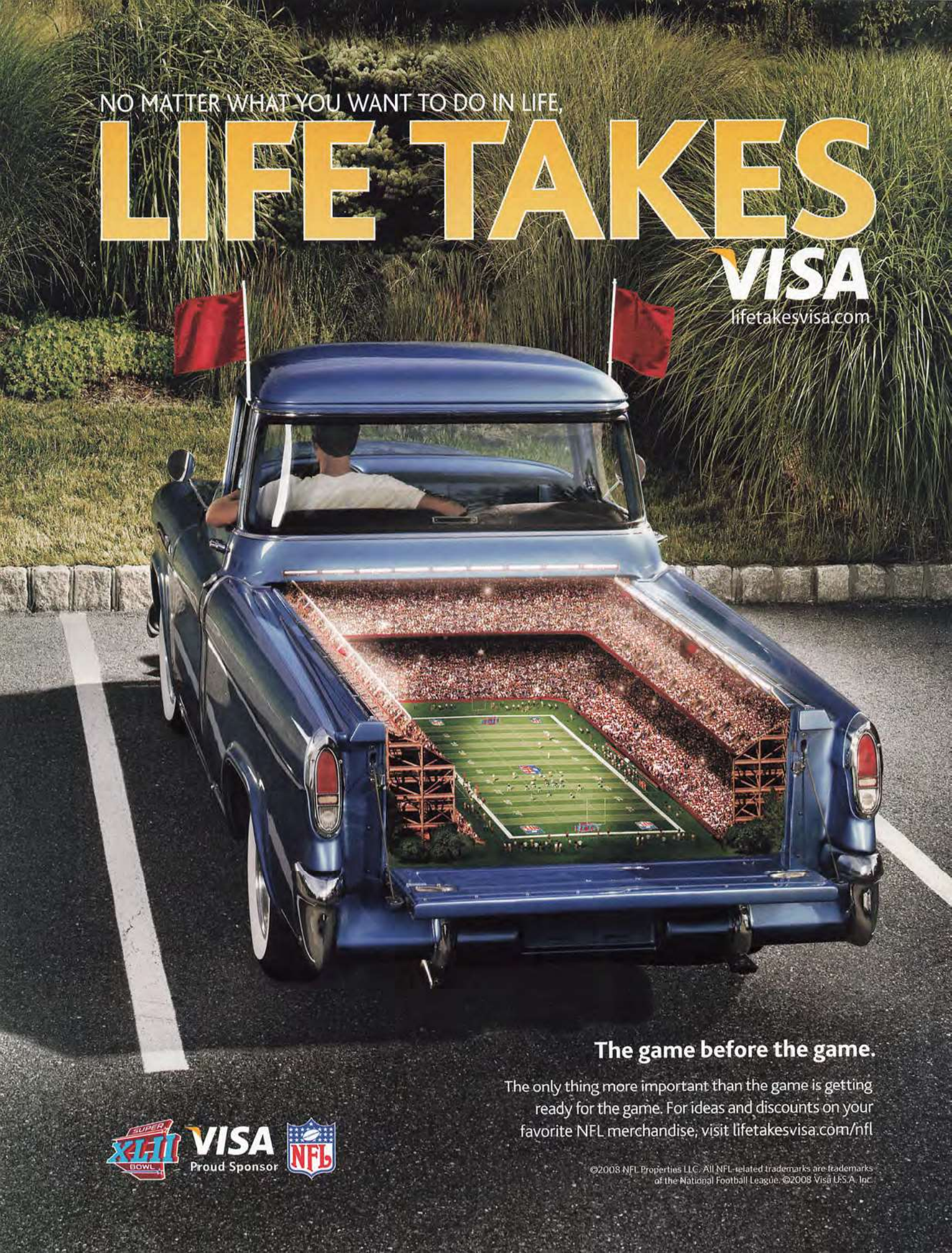
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FROM THE COMMISSIONER

On behalf of all of us in the National Football League, welcome to Arizona for Super Bowl XLII.

It has been 12 years since the Super Bowl was last played here when Dallas defeated Pittsburgh in Super Bowl XXX.

Much has changed since then, starting with the stadium for this game. Arizona's University of Phoenix Stadium is one of the NFL's spectacular new state-of-the-art facilities, and we are proud to showcase it today.

New stadiums such as this one, along with innovations and advances in technology, help to enhance the NFL experience for everyone as we continue to focus across the board on new ways to connect with more fans and bring them closer to the action.

Some things, though, have not changed, starting with the hospitality and other amenities that make Arizona an outstanding location for the Super Bowl.

The ongoing intensity and unpredictable character of each NFL season also has remained consistent. The 2007 NFL season was filled with the competitive excellence of our teams and remarkable individual milestones produced by players both young and old.

Green Bay Packers veteran Brett Favre seemed to break a different all-time passing mark every week, while Minnesota Vikings rookie Adrian Peterson made a name for himself by breaking the single-game rushing record.

Tom Brady and the New England Patriots set new standards for offensive excellence and team dominance. Young players such as Tony Romo of the Dallas Cowboys and Derek Anderson of the Cleveland Browns led their teams to new heights. There are many other examples, each underscoring the unparalleled story that is the NFL season year in and year out.

We are proud of our players not only because they are the world's greatest athletes, but also because they are leaders in their communities. Whether it's talking to kids at schools about health and fitness, visiting our troops overseas, rebuilding parks and homes, and many other activities, NFL players are out there helping and inspiring other people.

We salute our players and teams for their achievements this season on and off the field. We also appreciate our fans, whose passion for football and the NFL is what keeps us going—and what makes the Super Bowl the incredible global event that it is. As always, we thank you for your support.

Enjoy Super Bowl XLII!

Roger Goodell

Roger Goodell
NFL Commissioner

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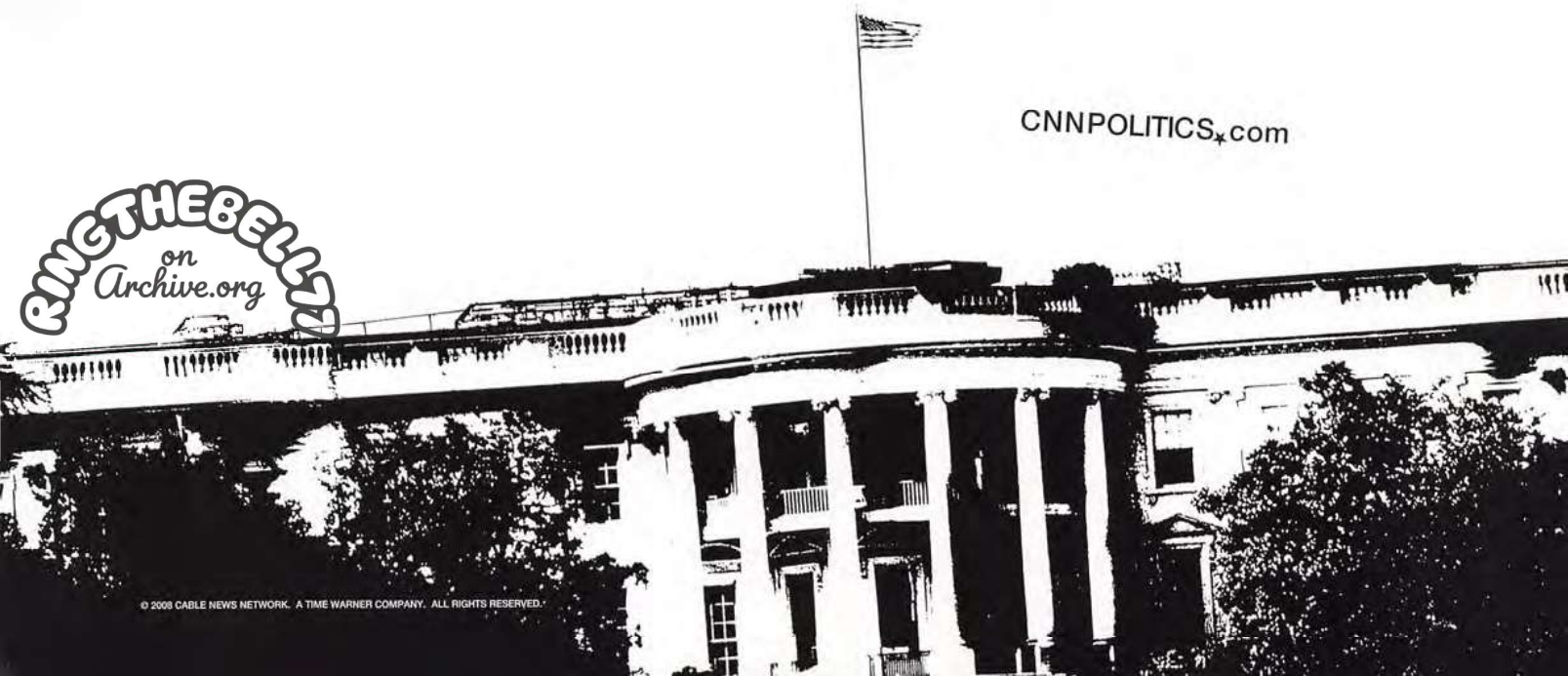

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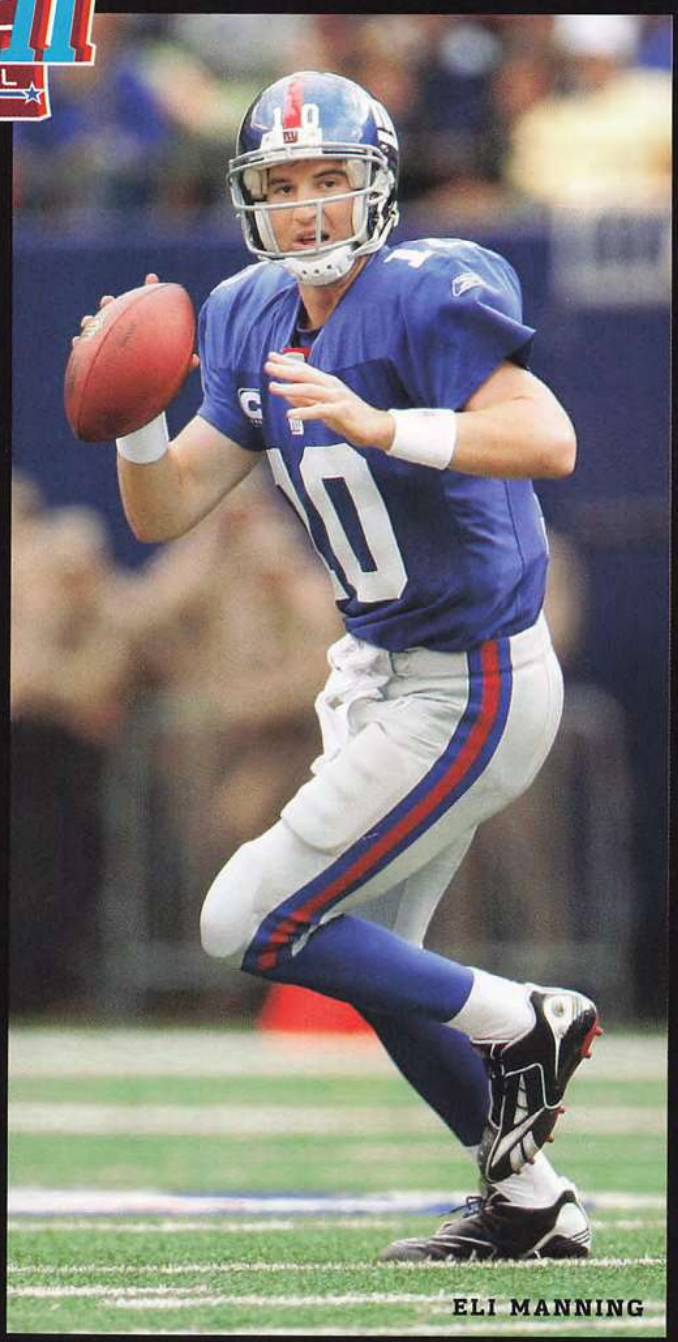

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RANDY MOSS, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

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BRANDON JACOBS, NEW YORK GIANTS

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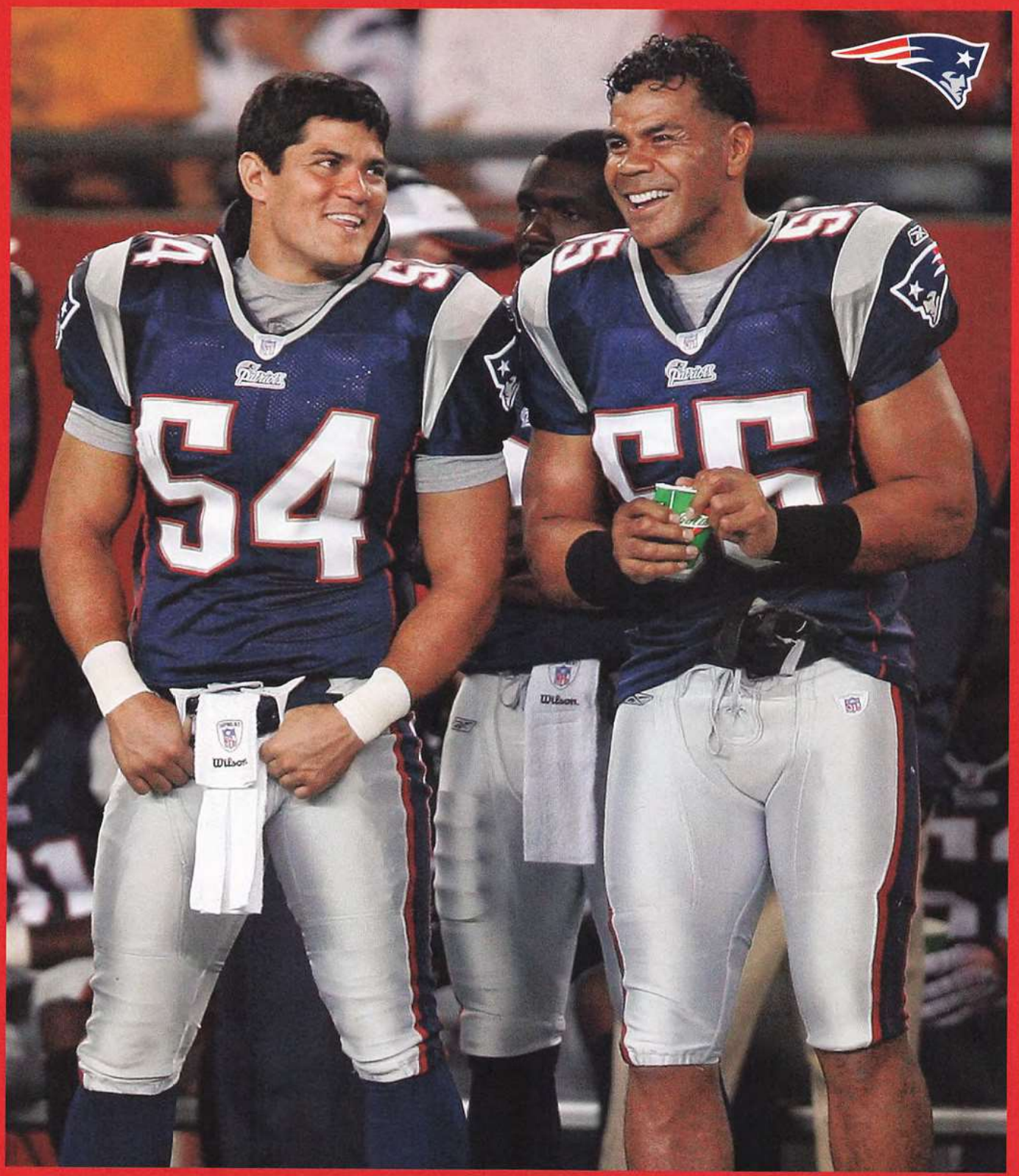

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TEDY BRUSCHI AND JUNIOR SEAU, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

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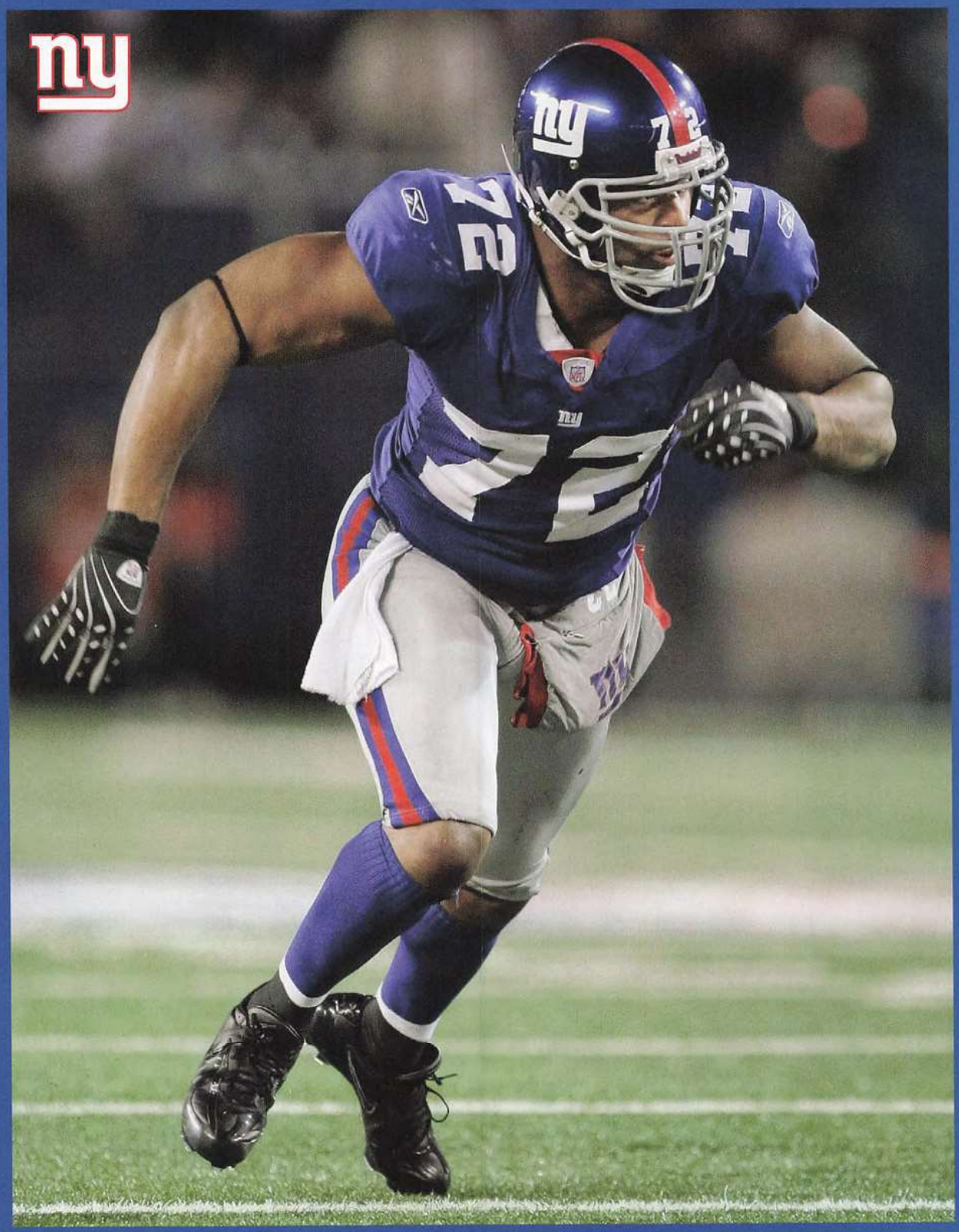

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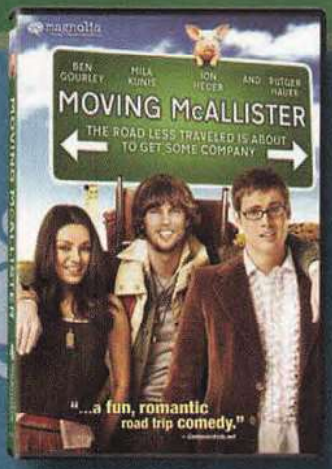
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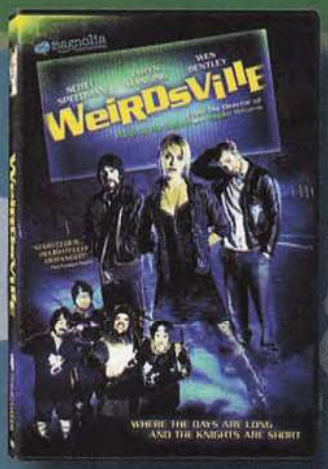

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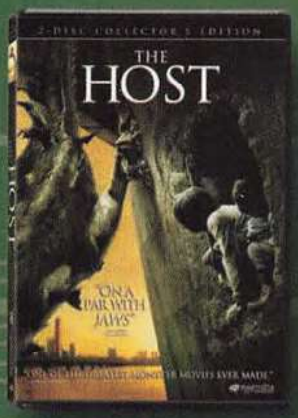

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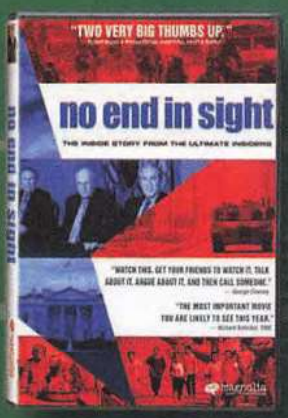

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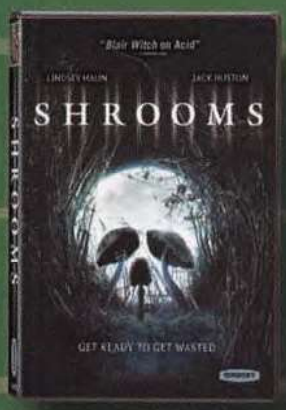

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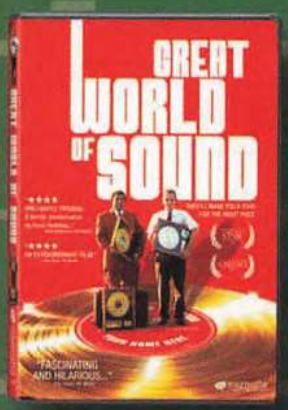

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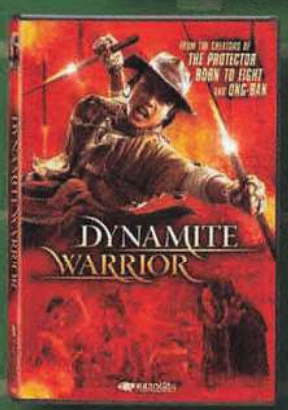

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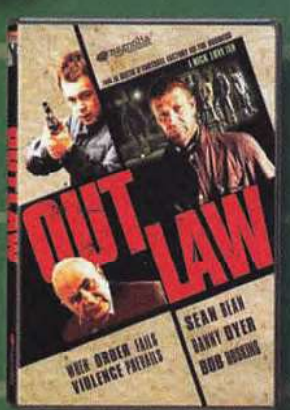

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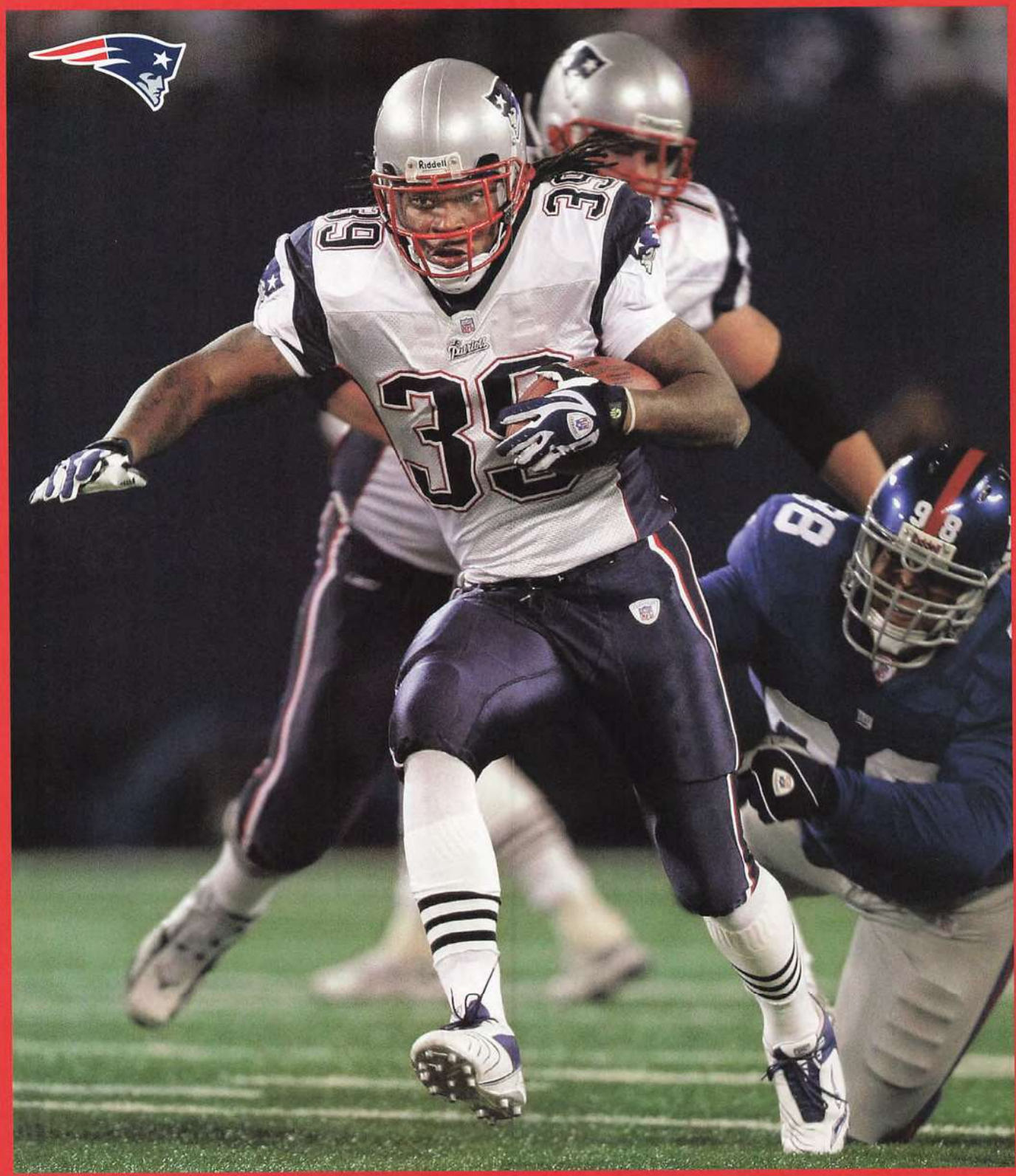

Rich Kane/US Presswire

LAURENCE MARONEY, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

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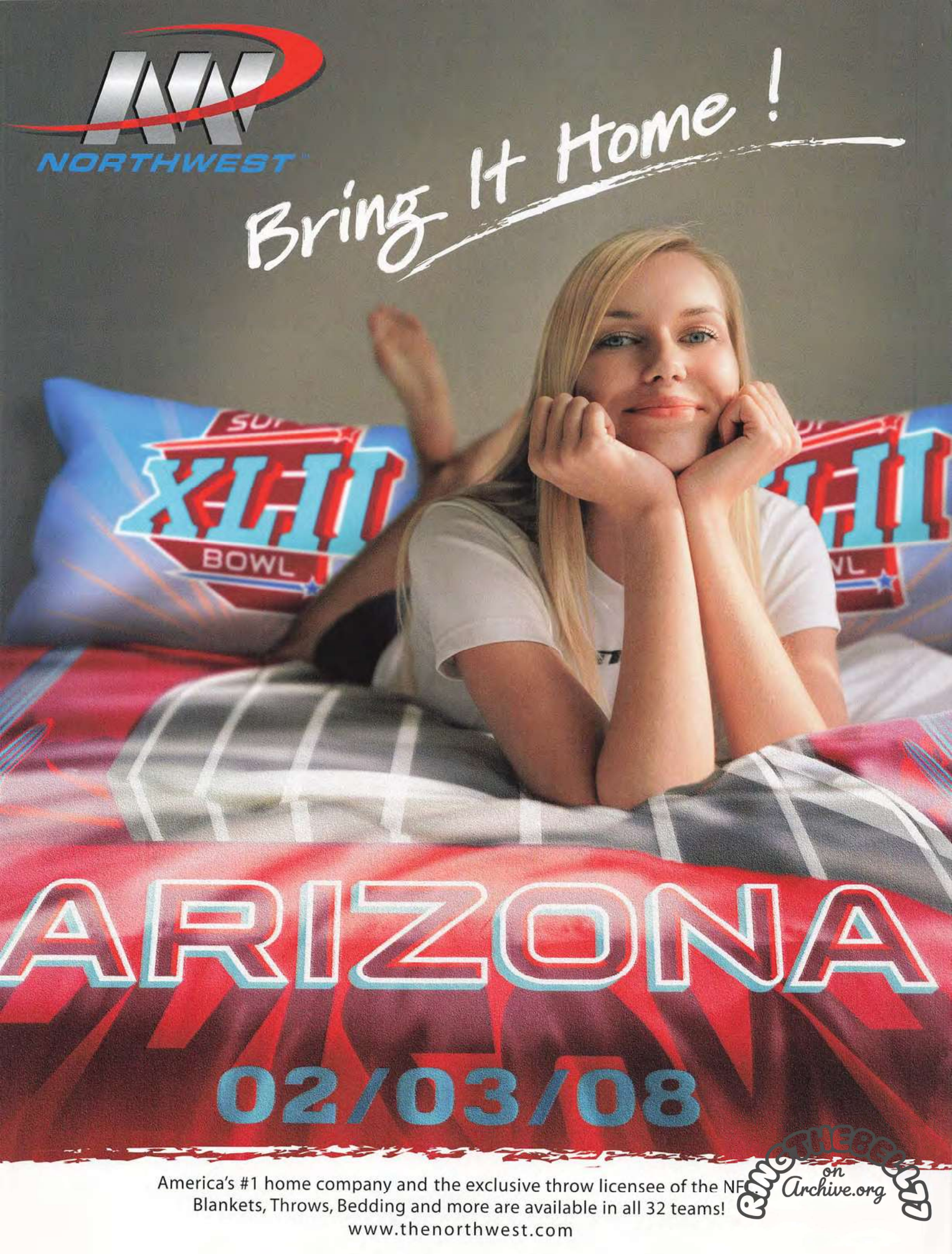

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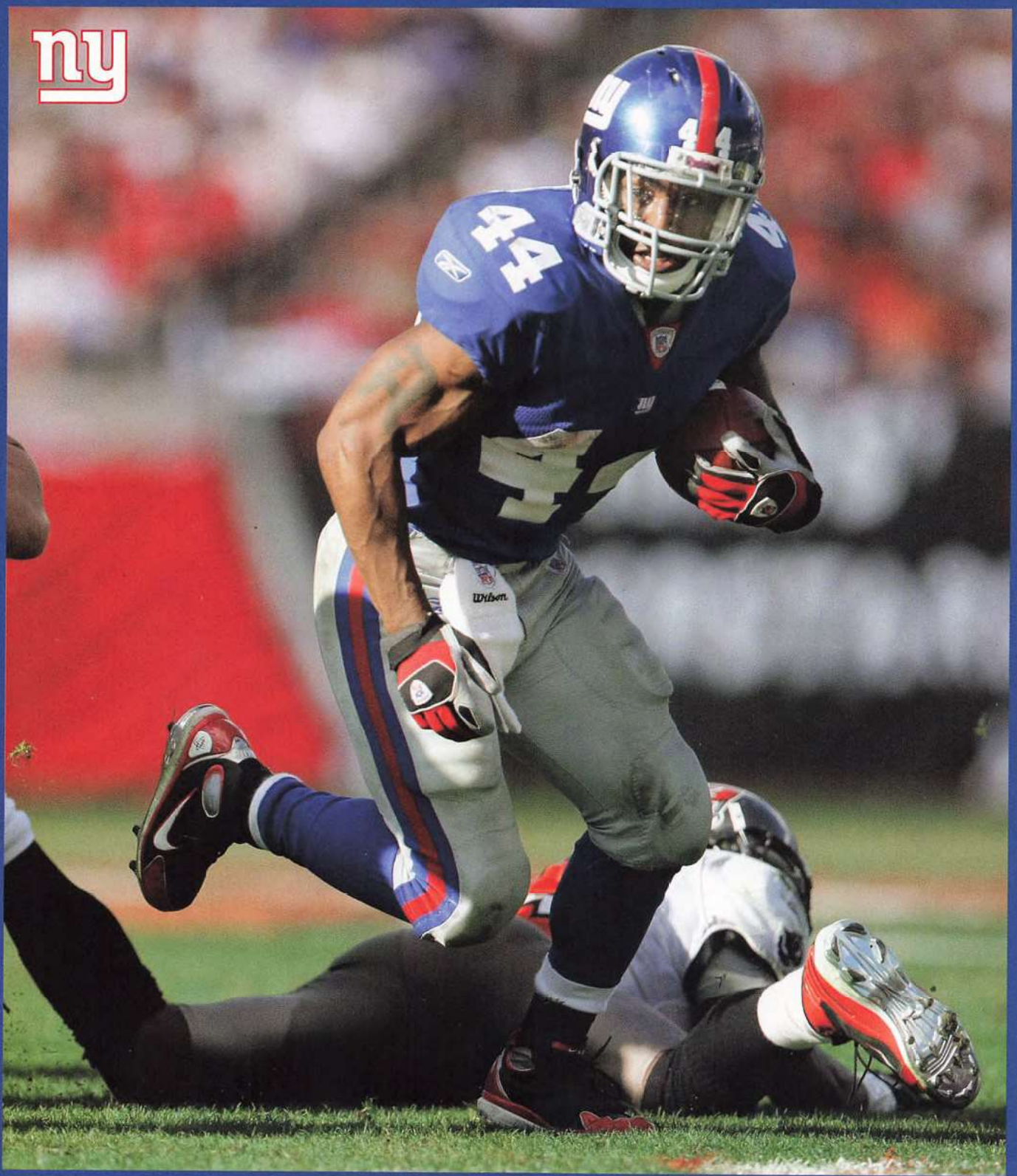

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AHMAD BRADSHAW, NEW YORK GIANTS

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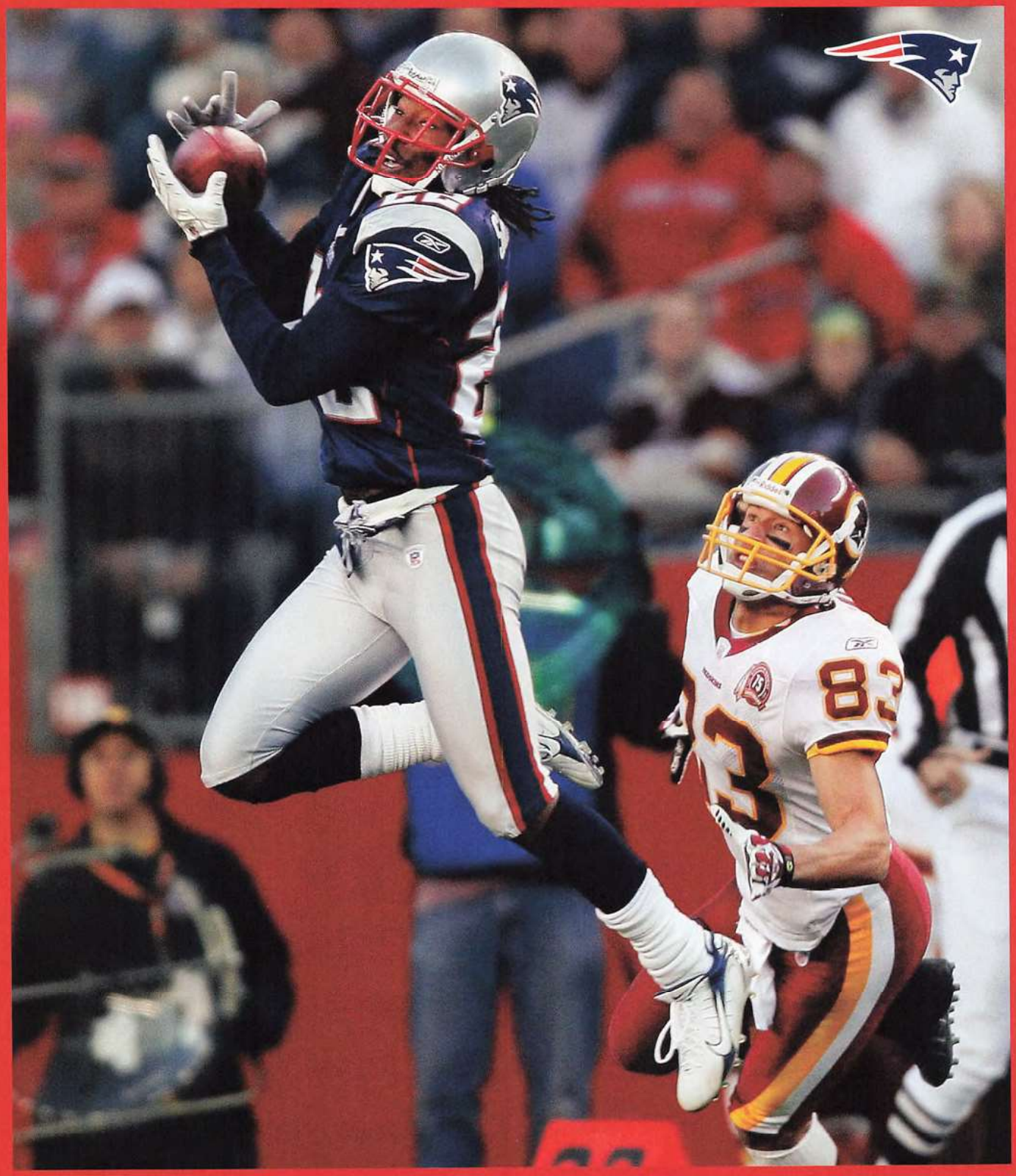

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ASANTE SAMUEL, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

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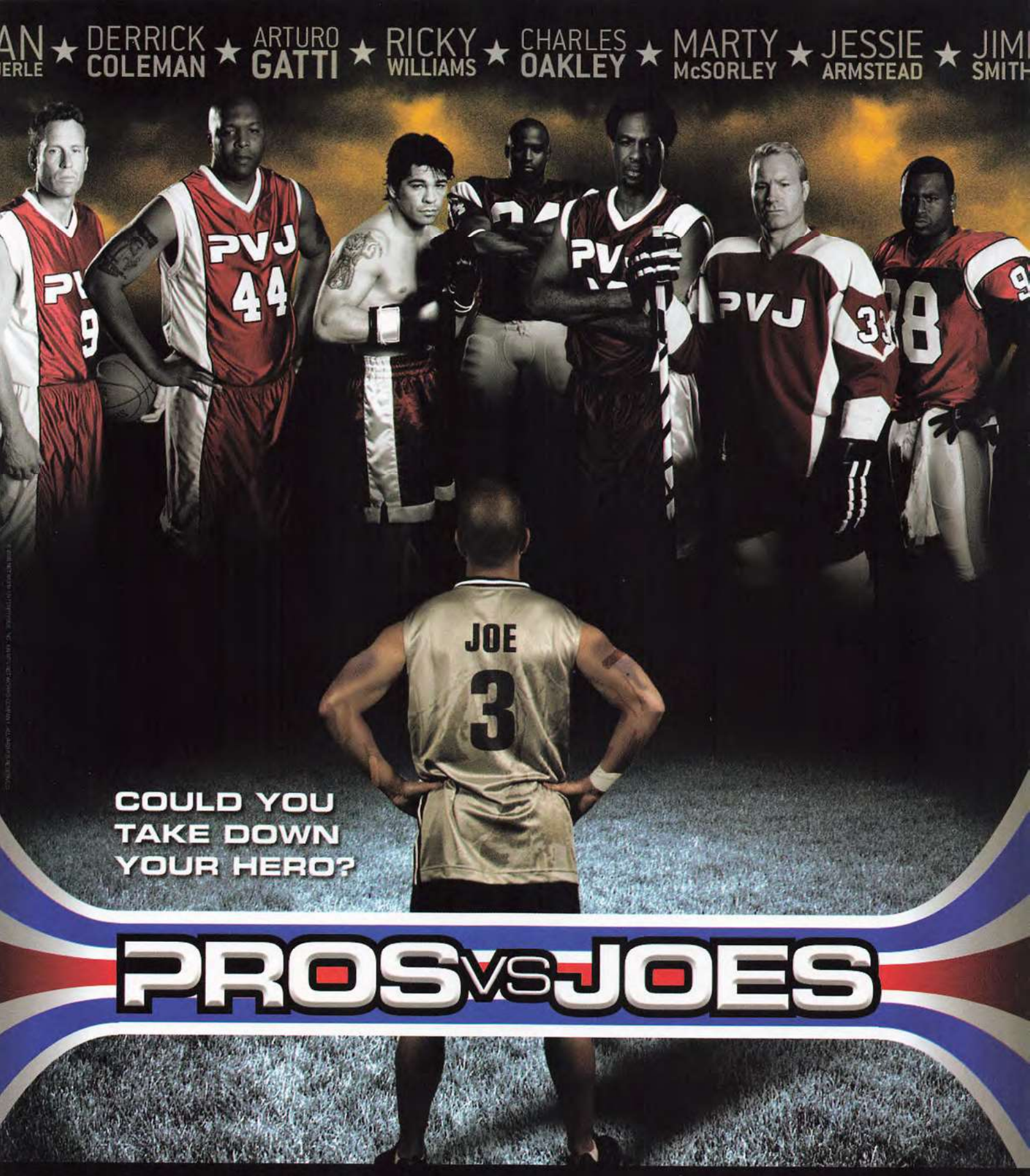
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WHO WANTS IT MORE?

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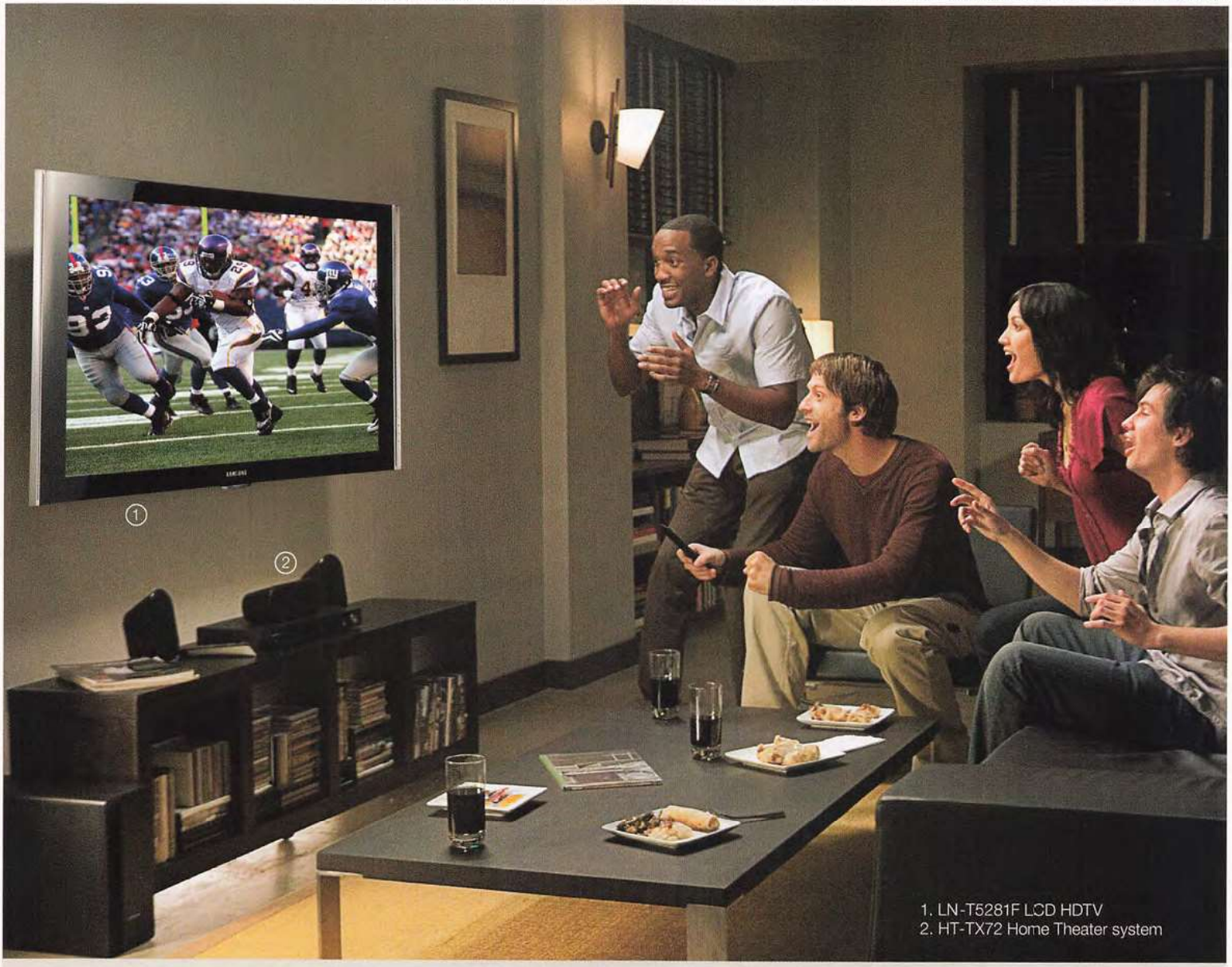

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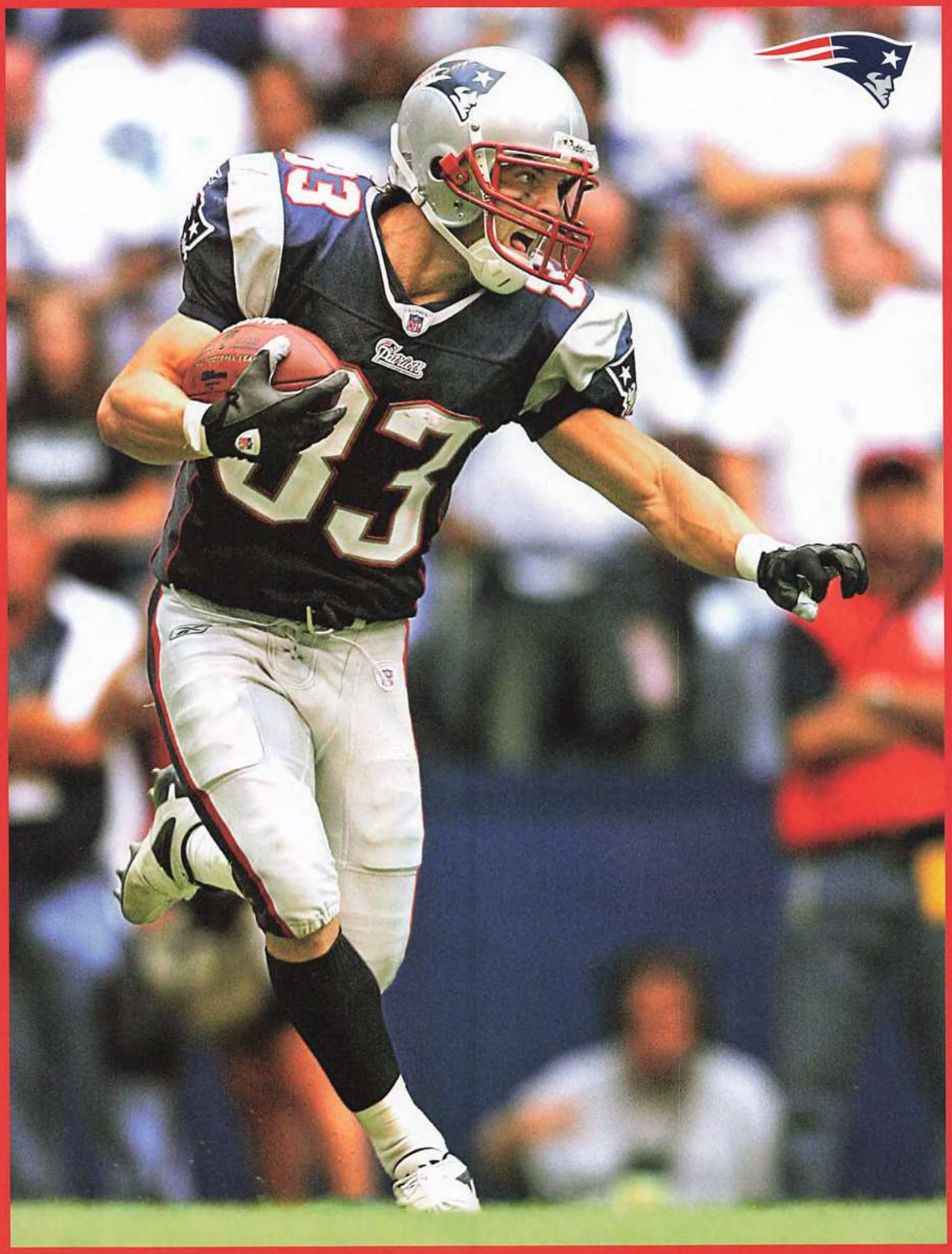

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WES WELKER, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

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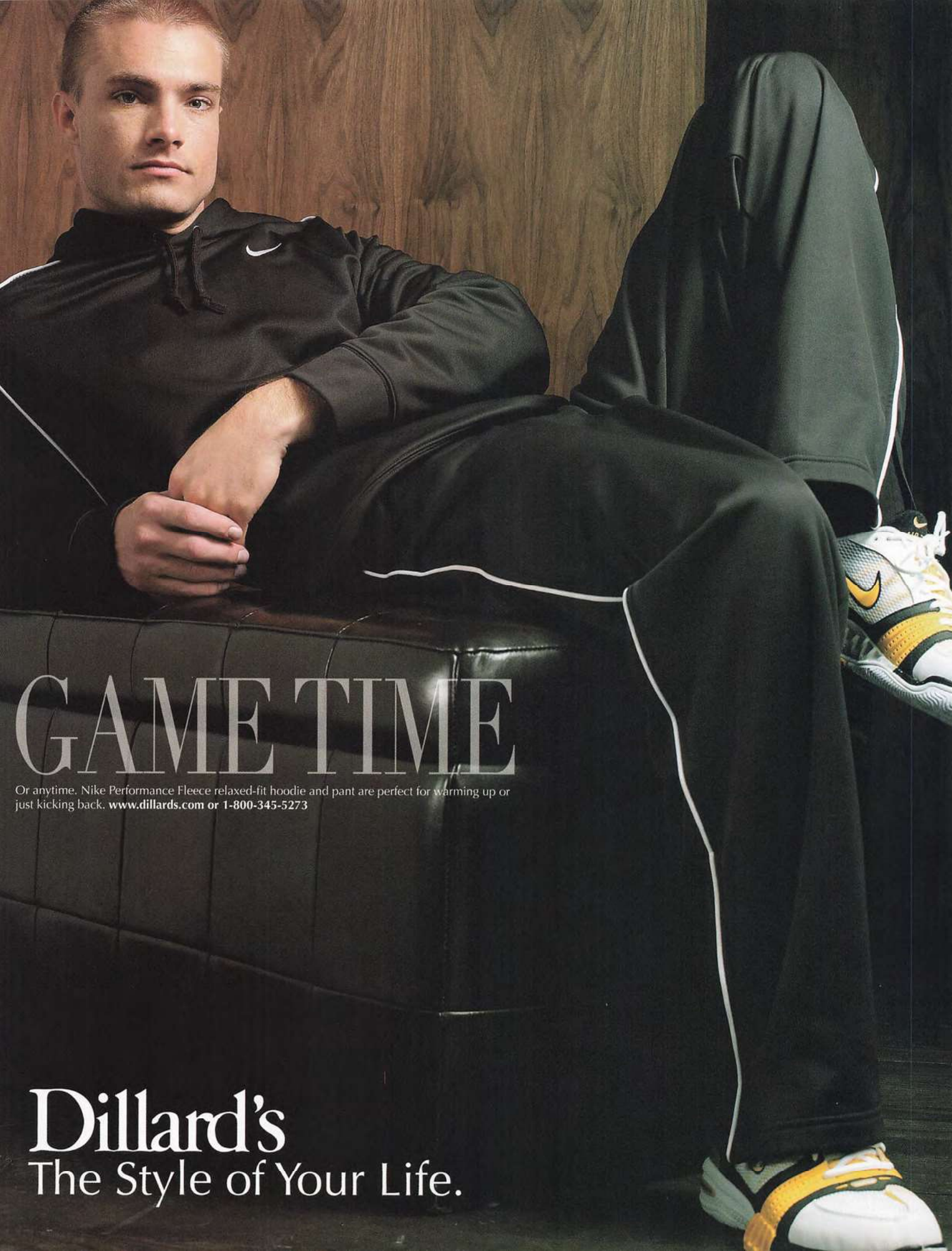
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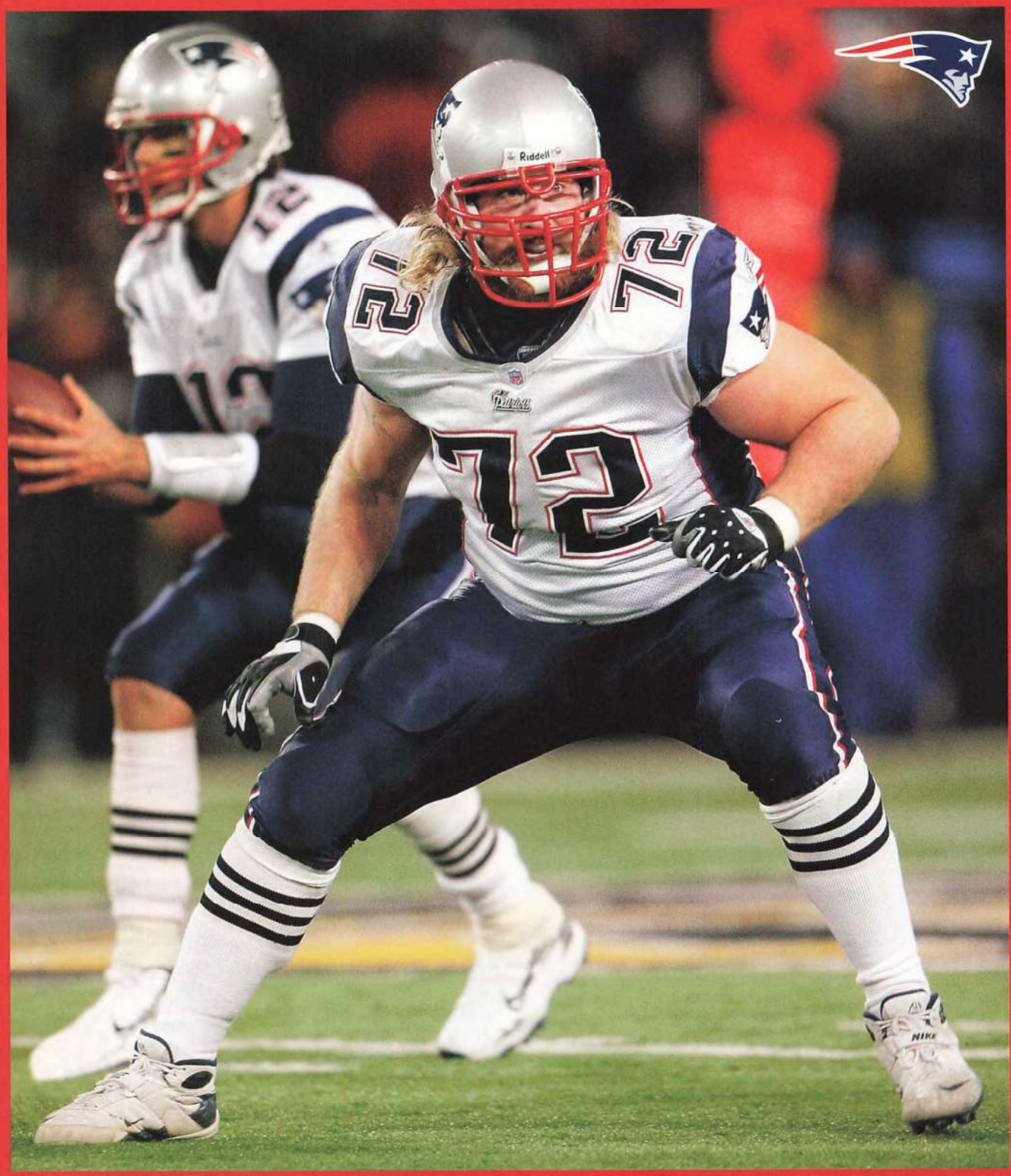

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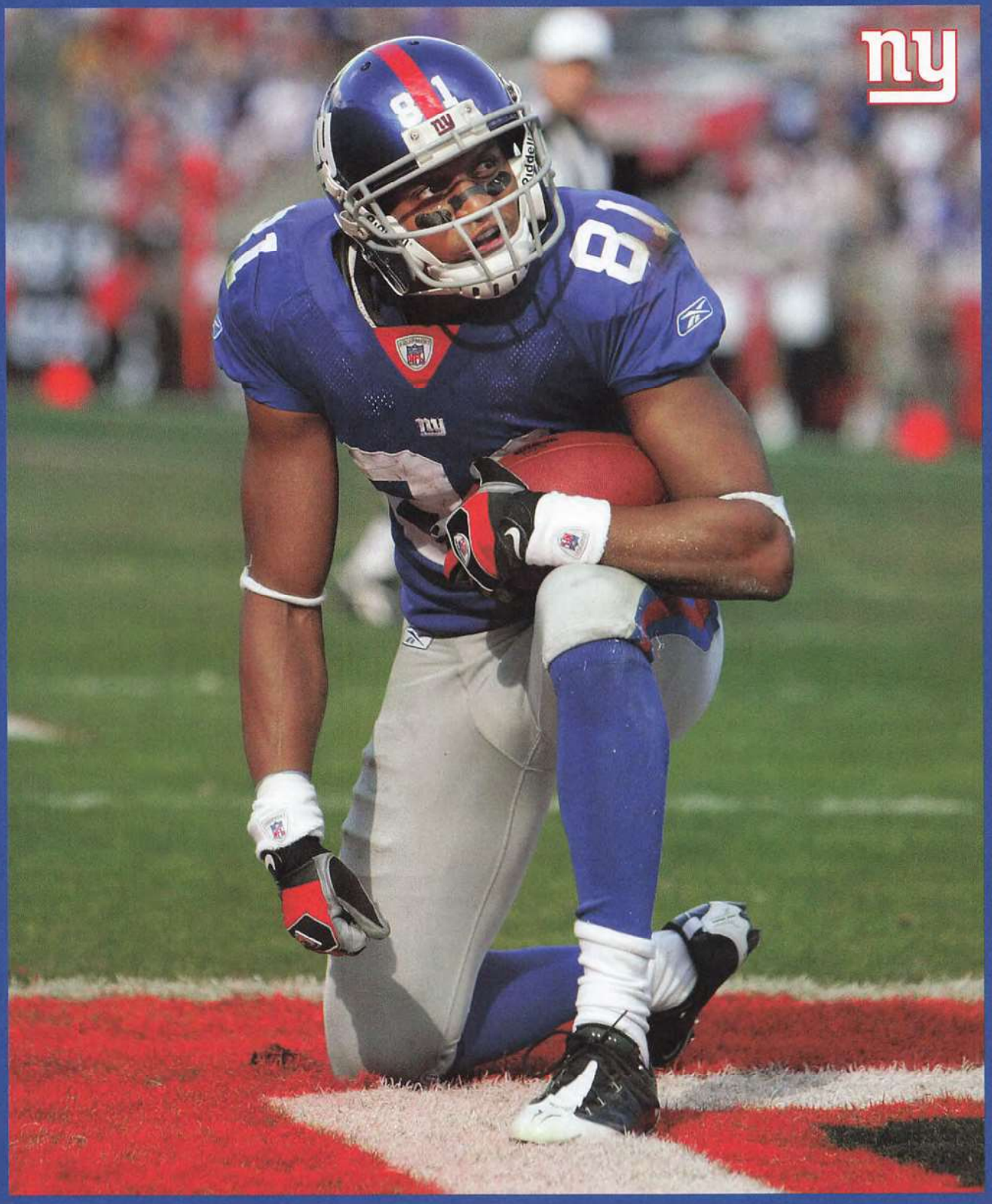

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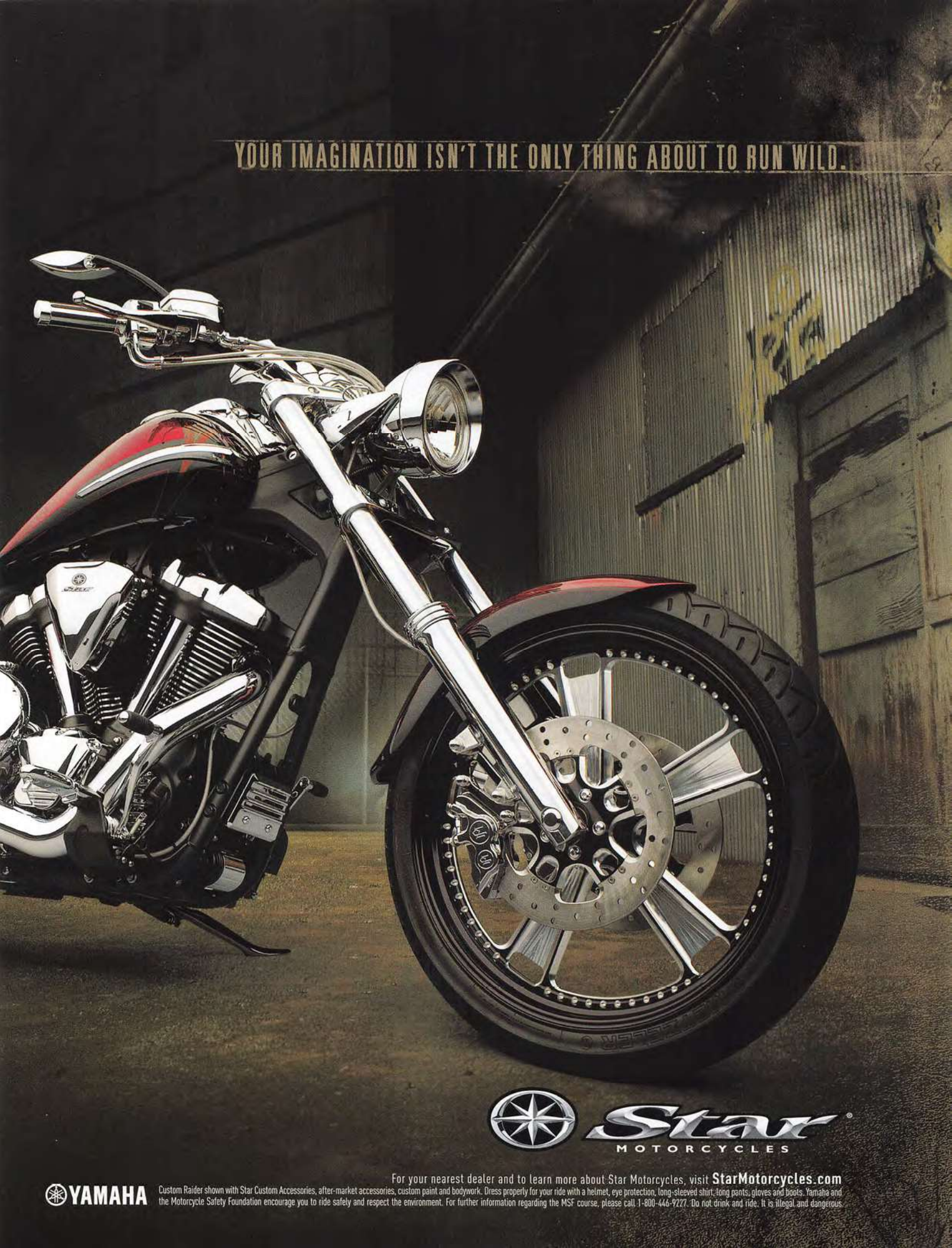
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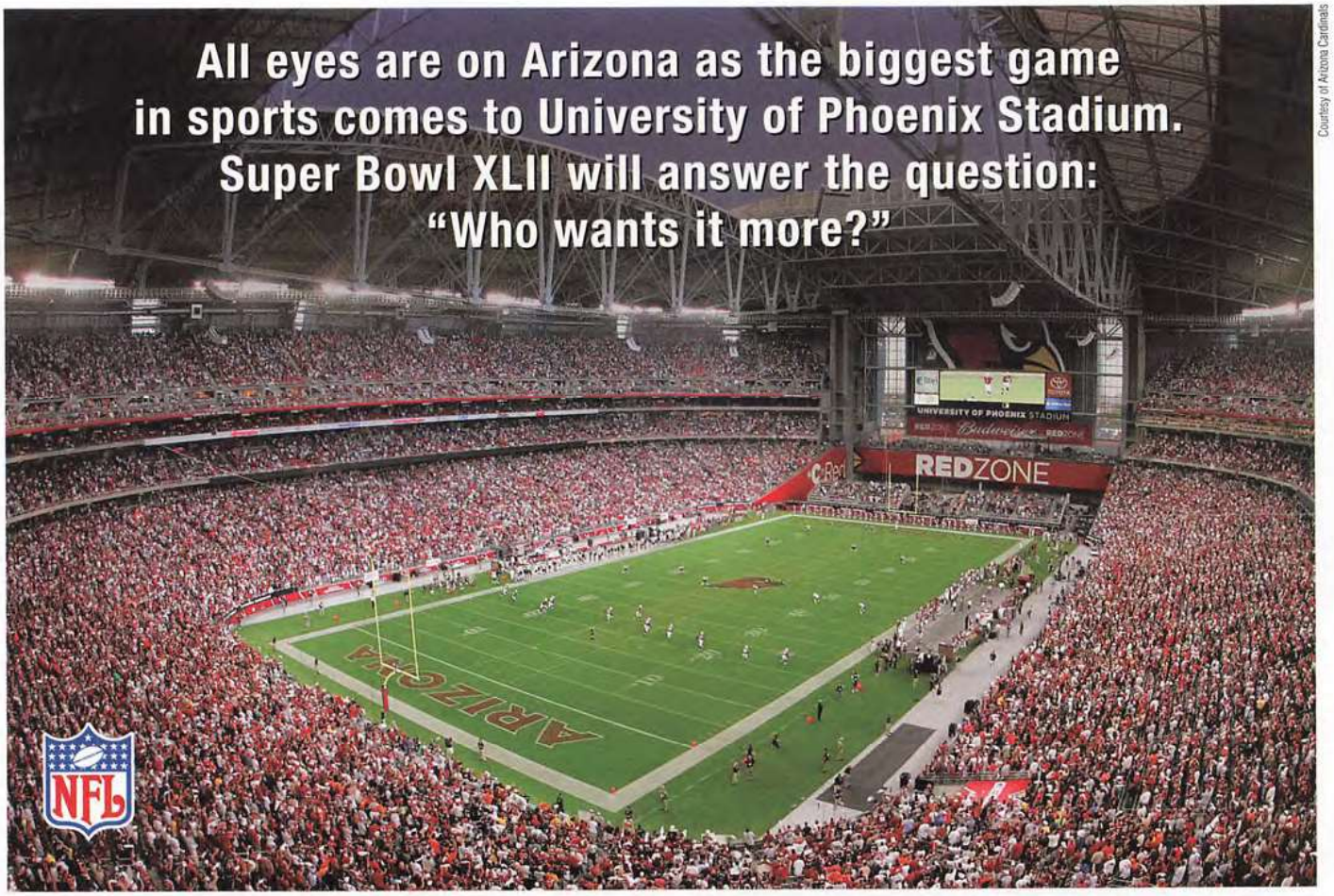
SUPER XLII BOWL


All eyes are on Arizona as the biggest game
in sports comes to University of Phoenix Stadium.
Super Bowl XLII will answer the question:
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Courtesy of Arizona Cardinals

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Much has changed since 1996 when we hosted Super Bowl XXX. With a retractable roof and a roll-out, natural grass playing field, University of Phoenix Stadium is uniquely designed for the world's greatest sporting event. We've added more than 100 miles of new freeways, transformed Sky Harbor International Airport, and made great progress on construction of a new light rail system.

Since Super Bowl XXX, Arizona's population has grown by nearly two million. Our climate, quality of life, and business opportunities continue to attract new residents and visitors alike.

As chairman of the Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee, I have had the honor of working with the NFL, the Arizona Cardinals, outstanding community leaders, and our devoted volunteers to make Super Bowl XLII a memorable experience.

Enjoy your stay, and we hope to see you again soon!

Yours truly,

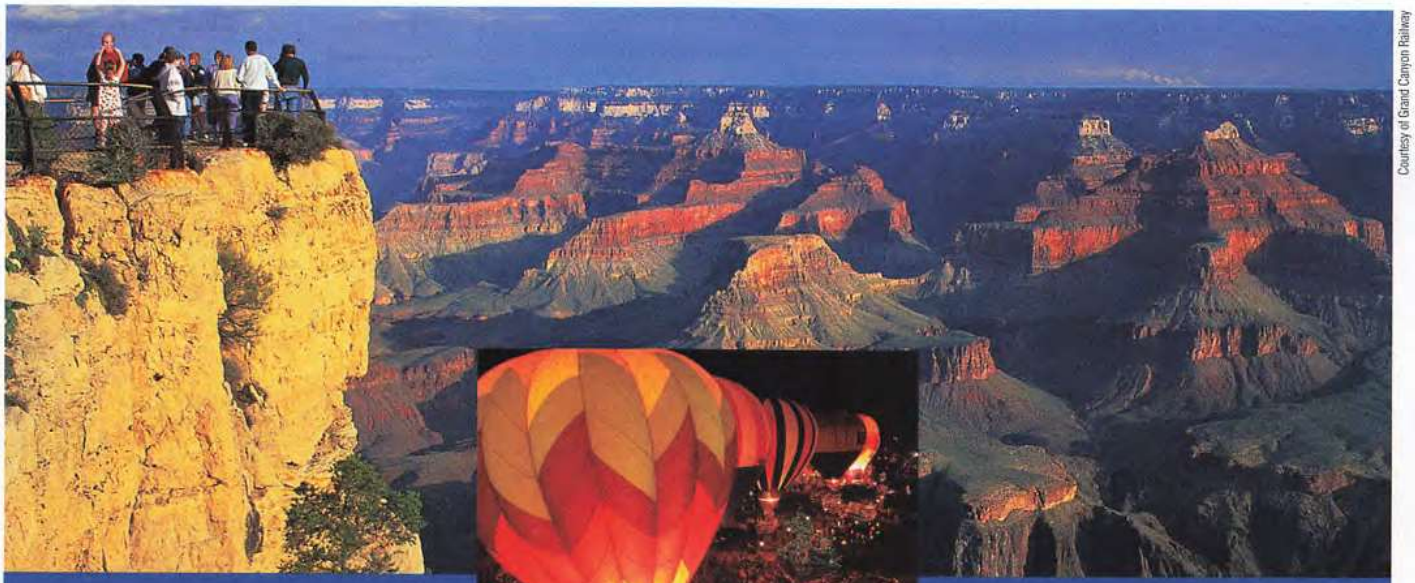
Michael Kennedy

Michael Kennedy, *Chairman, Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee*

HOST TO SUPER BOWL ARIZONA XLII · 2008

ARIZONA 02/03/2008

FROM GLENDALE TO THE GRAND CANYON



Courtesy of Grand Canyon Railway

Photos courtesy of City of Glendale

Situated in the south-central region of Arizona known as the "Valley of the Sun," Glendale ranks among America's fastest-growing cities with more than 240,000 residents. It forms part of a metropolitan ring around Phoenix that includes the cities of Chandler, Mesa, Scottsdale, Sun City, and Tempe.

For more than one thousand years, Native American farmers inhabited much of present-day Arizona. Europeans reached the area in the 1530s with the arrival of Franciscan missionaries and an expedition by Spanish explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado. The territory was ruled by Spain and then Mexico before becoming part of the United States following the Mexican-American War.

Mining and cattle spurred economic and population growth, leading Arizona to be admitted as the 48th state in the Union in 1912. Today it stands as the nation's leader in copper production and is known for its aerospace, military, and computer industries, while also focusing on biosciences and renewable energy technology. Arizona also is an increasingly popular tourist and retirement destination with more than 31 million visitors annually.

Grand Canyon National Park, located in northwestern Arizona, is one of the world's seven natural wonders and attracts four million visitors each year. More than one mile deep and 18 miles wide at times, the canyon was carved by the Colorado River.

Among Arizona's numerous national monuments is Monument Valley along the Utah/Arizona border, where freestanding sandstone rock formations rise up to 1,000 feet from the desert floor. Arizona boasts 27 state parks, while Phoenix's South Mountain Park is the largest municipal park in the world, spanning 16,500 acres.

The state has one of the nation's largest American Indian populations and is home to 22 Native American tribes. The biggest of these is the Navajo Nation, who reside on 11.6 million acres in northeast Arizona and parts of New Mexico and Utah.

Glendale was founded in 1892 as a religious and temperance colony. More people were attracted to the town following the establishment of a sugar beet factory and an ice plant for cooling produce shipped via the Santa Fe Railroad, while World War II brought thousands of servicemen to train at Thunderbird and Luke airfields.

It is now Arizona's "Antique Capital" with hundreds of antique and specialty shops in the Old Towne and Historic Catlin Court districts. Among the city's most famous attractions is Glendale Glitters, an annual holiday festival that features light displays, concerts, horse-drawn carriage rides, and shopping.

The region's average February day-time temperature is 70 degrees and drops to 44 degrees at night. It has earned its "Valley of the Sun" moniker with good reason—the area averages more than 325 days of sunshine and less than eight inches of rainfall each year.

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Courtesy of Super Bowl XLII Host Committee

Mark McGrath of the band Sugar Ray

COUNTING FROM 100

To mark the pending arrival of Super Bowl XLII, the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee held *Countdown to Kickoff...100 Days and Counting* on Saturday, Oct. 27, at the Westgate City Center in Glendale.

The all-day extravaganza, featuring local and national acts (and headlined by the band Sugar Ray) attracted thousands of fans of all ages. There were high school marching bands, cheerleaders, a Phoenix step-dance group, NFL Hall of Famers signing autographs, and an end-zone dance competition where fans strutted their stuff on stage for a chance to win prizes.

Honored at the event was the Army National Guard's 259th Security Force Company, which returned to Phoenix after serving one year in Iraq.

A FULL SPORTS PLATE

You can get your fill of sports in and around Phoenix, which is one of 11 metropolitan areas in the United States represented in each of the four major professional sports.

The Suns joined the NBA as an expansion franchise in 1968 and have twice reached the league finals. The Cardinals—charter members of the National Football League—moved to the area in 1988. The NHL reached town in 1996 when the Winnipeg Jets relocated here and were renamed the Coyotes, while Major League Baseball arrived two years later with the Diamondbacks. In 2001, they captured the World Series by beating the New York Yankees.

More than a half dozen other professional teams reside in the state, among them the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury and the Arizona Rattlers of the Arena Football League. In addition, 12 Major League Baseball teams hold spring training in the Grand Canyon State. Among the numerous Arizona colleges that have athletics programs are Division I schools University of Arizona, Arizona State, and Northern Arizona University.

Several annual events stamp the state's sporting calendar, including the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, which is part of college football's Bowl Championship Series and is held at University of Phoenix Stadium. The Insight Bowl, which is televised by NFL Network, features teams from the Big 10 and Big 12 conferences and is played at Sun Devil Stadium.

Golf comes to the area with the FBR Open at the TPC of Scottsdale. The event is one of the oldest stops on the PGA Tour. Aaron Baddeley will look to defend his title at this year's event, scheduled for Jan. 28-Feb. 3.

Ross D. Franklin/AP WWP

2007 FBR Open champion Aaron Baddeley

Holly Stein/Getty Images

Action from last year's AVP Tempe Open

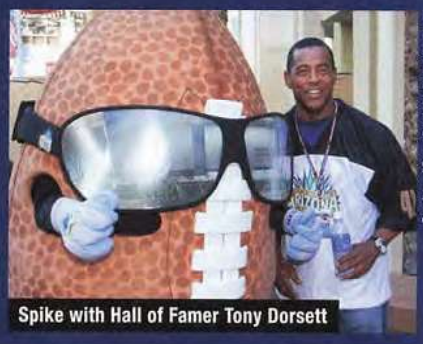
NASCAR makes a pit stop in November with the Arizona.Travel 200 and Checker Auto Parts 500 at Phoenix International Raceway, while pro volleyball visits with the AVP Tempe Open each spring at Tempe Beach Park.

SPIKE IS ONE SUPER COOL CAPTAIN

Super Bowl XLII's official mascot, "Team Captain Spike," was introduced last February at an event attended by children from Phoenix's NFL Youth Education Town. Adorned in sunglasses, white gloves, and blue tennis shoes, Spike then embarked on a 42-stop tour across Arizona leading up to Super Bowl XLII.

Along the way, he attended a Cactus League baseball game in Mesa (with Eagles QB Donovan McNabb), an ostrich festival in Chandler, and the Arizona Balloon Festival in Casa Grande. His final stop takes place on Saturday, Jan. 26, in Glendale when he leads a parade to kick off the opening of the NFL Experience.

"[He's] kind of like the Olympic torch for the Super Bowl," says Host Committee president Bob Sullivan. "Spike has been a major player to help us all get involved; he's our team captain."



Courtesy of Super Bowl XLII Host Committee

Spike with Hall of Famer Tony Dorsett

Facts about Spike:
Height: 7'0" / Favorite number: 42 / Shoe size: 42 wide / Throws: Both / Favorite letters: T.D. / Hero: Vince Lombardi / Favorite movie: *Rudy* / Favorite day: Sunday

A LOVE OF LEARNING

Launched in 2000, *Super Learning in a Super State* continues to be the largest youth outreach initiative in the history of the Super Bowl.

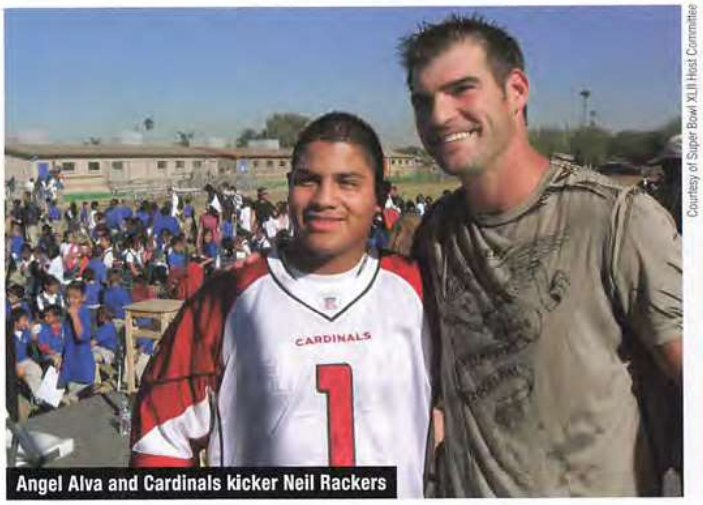
It's now reached more than one million youngsters, and this year's curriculum allowed Arizona students—regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location—to be part of Super Bowl XLII while learning more about their state. The curriculum incorporated the Super Bowl into Arizona history, geography, mathematics, and more.

Students who participated in Super Learning contests were eligible to win prizes and tickets to Super Bowl-related events, and teachers who implemented the program are being honored at a Super Week gala.

"The Super Learning curriculum is creative and engaging, and connects well with our students," says Kent P. Scribner, superintendent of the Isaac School District. "Our teachers especially appreciate that the cross-curricular design of these units are aligned to the Arizona Academic Standards."

Throughout the fall, the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee recognized educators and students for their efforts. Among those honored was Mesa High School football coach Bill McKane, who has taught and coached in Mesa Public Schools for the past 31 years and was the coach of Arizona Cardinals offensive lineman Deuce Lutui.

The committee also held a rally at the NFL Youth Education Town Academy in Phoenix, where it teamed up with the Academy's football team, cheerleaders, and orchestra for a pep rally in honor of the Super Learning in a Super State curriculum and Academy student Angel Alva. Alva was recognized as a Super Role Model Award winner for overcoming many obstacles in his pursuit of academic and athletic excellence. He was presented his award by Cardinals kicker Neil Rackers.



Courtesy of Super Bowl XLII Host Committee

Angel Alva and Cardinals kicker Neil Rackers

ATOP THE DRAFT BOARD

At about the same time the Arizona Cardinals were making Levi Brown their first-round pick in the 2007 NFL Draft, the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee was drafting volunteers to assist with Super Bowl XLII.

The Host Committee signed up thousands of residents to join *Spike's Super Crew* at a draft-day event held at University of Phoenix Stadium. For the past 11 months, these volunteers have assisted in assembling care packages for U.S. troops serving overseas, promoted water safety, helped local food banks, painted houses, supported the Veteran's Day parade, and participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

During Super Week, volunteers are welcoming fans to Sky Harbor International Airport and the many hotels in the Valley, working the NFL Experience interactive theme park, and checking credentials at league-sanctioned events and parties.

"It's an opportunity to actually be part of the game as opposed to just observing," says Bob Sullivan, president of the Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee. "And it gives people a chance to share what they love about Arizona with others."

Courtesy of Super Bowl XLII Host Committee

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

In preparation for Super Bowl XLII, Arizona businesses took part in programs designed to maximize their opportunity to be part of a greater game plan—business with the NFL.

The NFL's *Emerging Business Program* presented by SRP and powered by Sprint, in partnership with the Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee, provided a platform for minority and woman-owned enterprises to take their business to the next level. These workshops aimed to increase vendor knowledge of contracts for Super Bowl XLII and enhance future business opportunities.

Through educational and networking offerings, with emphasis on innovation and creativity, the Emerging Business Program facilitated the procurement of products and services for Super Bowl XLII. It also aimed to develop enduring relationships that will continue long after the Super Bowl champion is crowned.

For more information on the Emerging Business Program and a list of this year's participants, visit www.azsuperbowl.com.

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Don't forget to stock up on delicious Mission® Tortillas for your next game watching party. And for recipe ideas that will really score big with your friends and family, like these Chicken Fajita Quesadillas and Potato Skin Poppers, visit **MissionMenus.com.**

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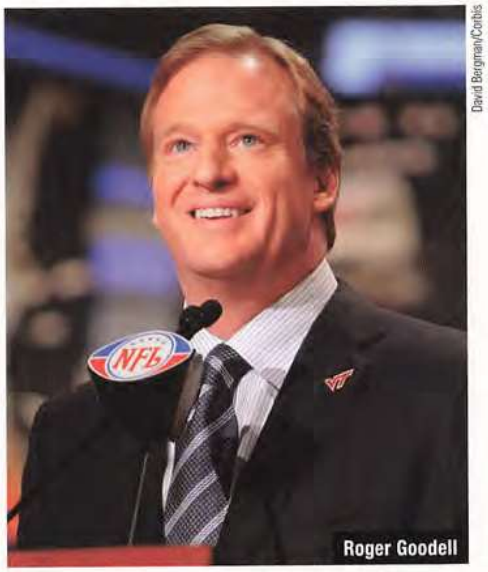
REFOCUSING ON RETIREES

The NFL and the NFL Players Association took several steps in 2007 to provide assistance to retired players with medical needs.

In May, the NFL, NFLPA, NFL Retired Players Association, NFL Alumni Association, NFL Charities, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame formed an alliance with the goal of coordinating support services for former players in need of medical care. Also being addressed by the alliance are cardiovascular health programs and assisted living arrangements.

Among the first initiatives was a $10 million commitment by NFL owners to provide additional funding for retired players to help pay for joint replacement surgeries and other medical assistance. That money supplemented an initial $7 million commitment by alliance members. In December, the NFL and NFLPA selected 14 leading medical centers across the country to assist players in need of joint replacement surgery. Also in December, the NFL and NFLPA agreed to improvements in the Bert Bell/Pete Rozelle NFL Player Retirement Plan, expediting the process in which players receive disability benefits.

"All of us in the NFL want to help former players who now find themselves in need of medical care through no fault of their own," says NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "Several NFL-related groups have been working independently over the years to provide medical assistance, but now we will work together to identify and help players more effectively in a common effort."



Roger Goodell

David Bergman/Corbis

A GAME WITHOUT BORDERS

In 2007, the NFL celebrated *Hispanic Heritage Month* (Sept. 15-Oct. 15) with a Spanish-language TV campaign and festivities at games across the country. Several teams designated home games in recognition of the effort and displayed special "Fútbol Americano—Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month" banners in their stadiums, while NFL players participated in local community outreach.

NFL FÚTBOL AMERICANO
Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

Festivities hit the national spotlight during the Sept. 23 game between the Cowboys and Bears on *Sunday Night Football*. Five-time Grammy-Award winner Gloria Estefan performed the national anthem, aided by youngsters from the Rauner Family YMCA in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, who held the American flag as she sang. Grammy Award-winning band Ozomatli, known for its eclectic sound and for addressing social justice issues, played at halftime.

Five of the league's Hispanic-American players suited up for the game. They were: Chicago safety Adam Archuleta, tackle Antonio Garay, and center Roberto Garza; and Dallas kicker Martin Gramatica and quarterback Tony Romo.

"One of the distinguishing characteristics of football is the way it brings diverse groups of people together," says Peter O'Reilly, NFL director of marketing. "We were excited to honor our Hispanic players, coaches, front-office personnel, and our fans."

The NFL also launched a Spanish-language TV campaign, "We are fans!," with spots on CBS, FOX, ESPN, and NBC, as well as Spanish-language networks Telemundo and ESPN Deportes. Throughout the season, *Monday Night Football* aired in Spanish on ESPN Deportes and NBC's *Sunday Night Football* was available in Spanish via SAP (Secondary Audio Programming).

At Super Bowl XLII, Univision Radio is completing its 30-game broadcast schedule, while Telemundo is airing the Tazón Latino II presented by Coors Light and the Pepsi Smash Super Bowl Fiesta.

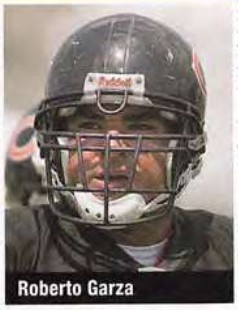
Gloria Estefan

Antonio Garay

Adam Archuleta

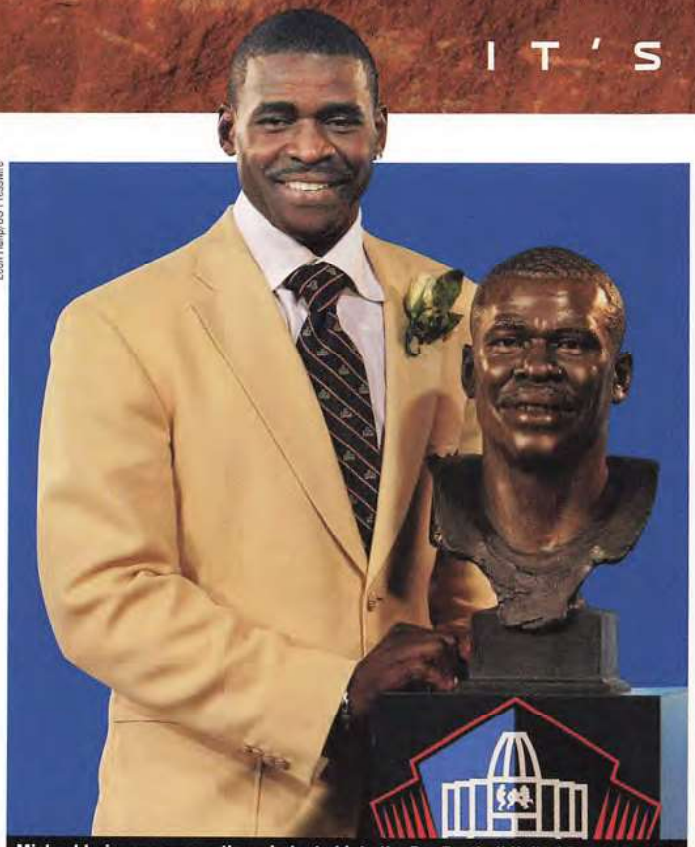
Martin Gramatica

Tony Romo


Roberto Garza

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

Antonio Garay (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images); Adam Archuleta (Greg Trott/Getty Images); Martin Gramatica (Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images); Tony Romo (Jim McIsaac/Getty Images); Roberto Garza (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)



Leon Halip/US Presswire

Michael Irvin was among those inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2007.

SIX LEGENDS HIT THE HALL

Last August, the Pro Football Hall of Fame opened its doors to six new members, among them three-time Super Bowl champion **Michael Irvin**. The wide receiver's career spanned the 1988-99 seasons, and he played on Cowboys teams that captured Super Bowls XXVII, XXVIII, and XXX. In 1995, Irvin set an NFL record with eleven 100-yard receiving games.

"Michael was the most competitive individual I every played with. His work ethic, charisma, and drive carried us to our three Super Bowl titles," says NFL career rushing leader Emmitt Smith.

Also inducted were **Thurman Thomas**, **Bruce Matthews**, **Gene Hickerson**, **Charlie Sanders**, and **Roger Wehrli**.

Thomas, a running back who helped Buffalo to four straight Super Bowl appearances, was the league's 1991 MVP and strung together eight consecutive 1,000-yard rushing seasons.

Matthews, a versatile offensive lineman, spent his entire 19-year career with the Oilers/Titans franchise and tied a league mark by being chosen to 14 straight Pro Bowl teams.

Hickerson, an offensive guard, was the lead blocker for three Hall of Fame backs, among them Jim Brown. He played for Cleveland's 1964 NFL championship team.

Sanders was one of the NFL's first great pass-catching tight ends and ranked as Detroit's all-time reception leader (336) at the time of his retirement in 1977.

Wehrli , a longtime Cardinals cornerback, had 40 interceptions and recovered 19 fumbles in a career that spanned 1969-82.

'07 MEMORIES

Georgia Frontiere's Rams captured Super Bowl XXXIV.

Reuters/Corbis

Two days before the conference championship games, the NFL was saddened by the passing of **Georgia Frontiere**, the principal owner of the Rams since 1979. One of the few active female owners of a major professional franchise, the Rams won Super Bowl XXXIV and represented the NFC in Super Bowl XXXVI under her leadership.

"Georgia's philanthropic work was legendary, [and] her special focus was retired NFL players and the arts," said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "She was a talented and wonderful person."

The league announced several revisions to its **annual draft**. Day one will start at 3 p.m. and has been reduced from three rounds to two. Teams are now allowed 10 minutes (down from 15) for each first-round pick and seven minutes (down from 10) for second-round selections. Rounds 3-7 will take place on day two and begin at 10 a.m. Each team is being given five minutes to make its selection in these rounds.

Among the **NFL standouts who retired** in 2007 was wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson, who caught more than 800 passes in his 11 years in the league and played for Tampa Bay's Super Bowl XXXVII title team. Also moving on was running back Marshall Faulk, who totaled more than 19,000 yards from scrimmage. Faulk was part of the Rams team that defeated Tennessee in Super Bowl XXXIV. Other retirements included running back Curtis Martin, whose 14,101 rushing yards are fourth in NFL history, and offensive guard Will Shields, who made 12 Pro Bowl appearances.

The **Giants and Jets** broke ground on the first stadium to be jointly owned by two NFL teams. The $1.3 billion facility, being built next to Giants Stadium, will open in 2010 with seating for 82,500.

In an unprecedented move, the NFL provided for a **three-way national TV broadcast** of the Dec. 29 Patriots-Giants game, when New England completed the first 16-0 regular season in league history. CBS, NBC, and NFL Network all aired the contest, which attracted 34.5 million viewers, the largest audience to watch an NFL regular-season game since 1995.

NFL owners awarded the **2011 Super Bowl** to North Texas, with the game to be played at the Cowboys' soon-to-be-constructed $1 billion facility. The stadium is expected to seat at least 93,000 and could accommodate up to 14,000 additional fans for Super Bowl XLV.

Courtesy of Dallas Cowboys and HKS

Artist's rendering of the Cowboys' stadium that will host Super Bowl XLV

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SHOOTING FOR 60!

In October, the NFL launched a new national youth health and fitness campaign featuring players throughout the league.

NFL Play 60: The NFL Movement for an Active Generation is focused on the health and wellness of young fans by encouraging them to be active for at least 60 minutes a day.

Designed to tackle childhood obesity, NFL Play 60 has combined the league's long-standing commitment to health and fitness with an impressive roster of partner organizations—Action for Healthy Kids, Ad Council, American Heart Association, National Dairy Council, Nickelodeon, United Way, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Among the players involved are Tom Brady, Steven Jackson, and Tony Romo, who are motivating and inspiring kids as Play 60 team captains on www.NFLRUSH.com, the league's official website for kids. To launch the program, more than 25 teams helped build Youth Fitness Zones in their communities, providing new places for kids to be active. The fitness zone projects were part of the NFL's annual Hometown Huddle, a day of service in partnership with the United Way.

"Were taking a leadership role in the movement to get youngsters fit," says NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "Our players know the importance of staying healthy. It's important that young fans also understand the value of exercise. Play 60 is an important tool in ensuring children get the daily physical activity recommended by health and fitness experts."

The NFL Play 60 program was formally introduced at an outreach event in New Orleans. As part of the day's focus on fitness, Saints players exercised with students from Dibert Elementary School. Players and students then built and painted a new track at a nearby park, replacing one that had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Courtesy of United Way

Saints QB Drew Brees with Dibert School students.

STILL MOVING FORWARD

What Moves U remains one of the primary programs in the NFL's youth health and fitness initiative. Developed in 2006 by NFL Charities and the American Heart Association, What Moves U is a school-based program and awareness campaign designed to promote physical fitness and healthy living.

The program incorporates several key elements: an in-school activity kit created for and by teachers; program-specific learning materials and school promotional materials; and an interactive fitness-focused website for children. Also part of the initiative is a national public awareness campaign that includes television, radio, and print PSAs, as well as community outreach events coordinated by NFL teams and American Heart Association affiliates.

Unique to student physical fitness programs, the What Moves U in-school activation kit helps teachers of various academic disciplines find ways to integrate physical activity into existing academic lesson plans.

More than 25,000 middle schools nationwide received activation kits in 2006. Another set of support materials—including team-based fitness posters and student handouts, was delivered to schools during the 2007-08 academic year. Visit www.whatmovesu.com for more information.

Pregame. Postgame. None of it matters if you don't

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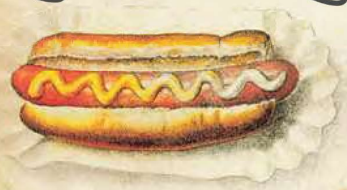

Fig. 1 Hot Dog

Fig. 2 Drumstick

Fig. 3 Cheeseburger

Fig. 4 Corn on the Cob

Fig. 5 Shish Kebab

Fig. 6 Rib Eye

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FLAGGED FOR FUN

It was an exciting year for *NFL Flag Football*, highlighted by the first Flag Football World Championship held in the United States.

Courtesy of NFL International

The 2007 FFWC took place Aug. 7-10 at the New Orleans Saints Practice Facility and the Louisiana Superdome. Canada captured the title when its team beat Mexico, 27-14, in the championship game, which was held prior to the Saints-Bills NFL preseason contest.

Teams representing 10 nations and three continents took part in the tournament, which is open to 12- to 14-year-olds. They were drawn from a field of more than 800 teams worldwide that competed for the chance to represent their country. The U.S. entry hailed from the Michael Ann Russell Jewish Community Center of Miami. They went 4-0 in round-robin play before falling to Canada in the semifinals.

In November, the NFL FLAG National Tournament of Champions was held at Disney's Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando, where three champions were crowned. Teams from Fort Wayne, Ind., captured both the 9-11 Co-ed division and 12-14 Girls division, while the WASUP Cardinals of Henderson, Nev., were the winners in the 12-14 Boys division. As a result of that victory, Henderson will represent the United States at the 2008 FFWC.

More than 100,000 youngsters across the country play NFL FLAG, which is a non-contact version of traditional football and is offered for boys and girls ages 5-17. For more information on this and other NFL youth programs, visit www.nflyouthfootball.com.

BEST "YET" TO COME

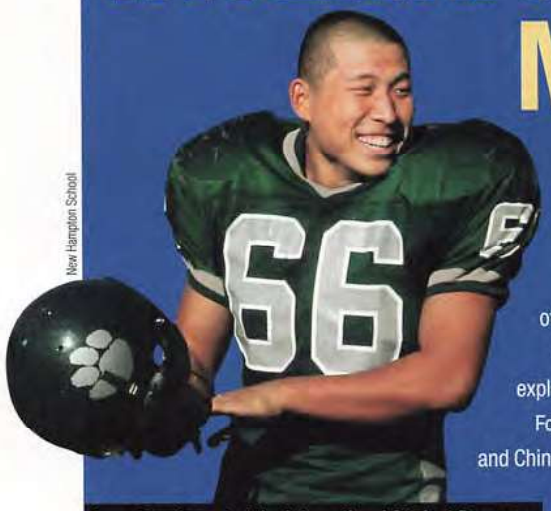
A Super Week press conference will announce the NFL's reinvestment in Arizona's YET facility.

NFL YOUTH EDUCATION • TOWN •

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young, and other dignitaries will attend the Jan. 31 event, which will reinforce the league's commitment to the 10,000-square foot Youth Education Town center. The NFL is making a $1 million contribution to fund expansion of the center and outreach programs, and the donation is being matched by the Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee.

The NFL YET Arizona is a full-service charter school in Phoenix that was established as the lasting legacy of Super Bowl XXX. It serves 1,000 students and is managed by the Espiritu Community Development Corporation.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS MAKE THE GRADES



New Hampton School

Long Ding is part of the International Student Program.

Long Ding became an instant Patriots fan when he watched New England win Super Bowl XXXIX from his living room in Wuhan, China. In September 2007, Long arrived at the New Hampton School (N.H.) through the *USA Football International Student Program* (ISP), which gives overseas athletes an opportunity to make the grade on the gridiron and in the classroom.

Having started the season as a punter and kicker, Long eventually lined up on the prep school team's offensive and defensive lines, making the most of his 6-1, 210-pound frame.

"He continues to learn the game and the English language every day, and wants to be a contributor," explains New Hampton head coach David Perfield. "We think Long has the leg to kick in college."

For the 2007-08 academic year, the ISP has 12 overseas student-athletes from Germany, Denmark, Mexico, and China who are enrolled at schools in New Hampshire, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

For more information on the program, visit www.USAFootball.com.

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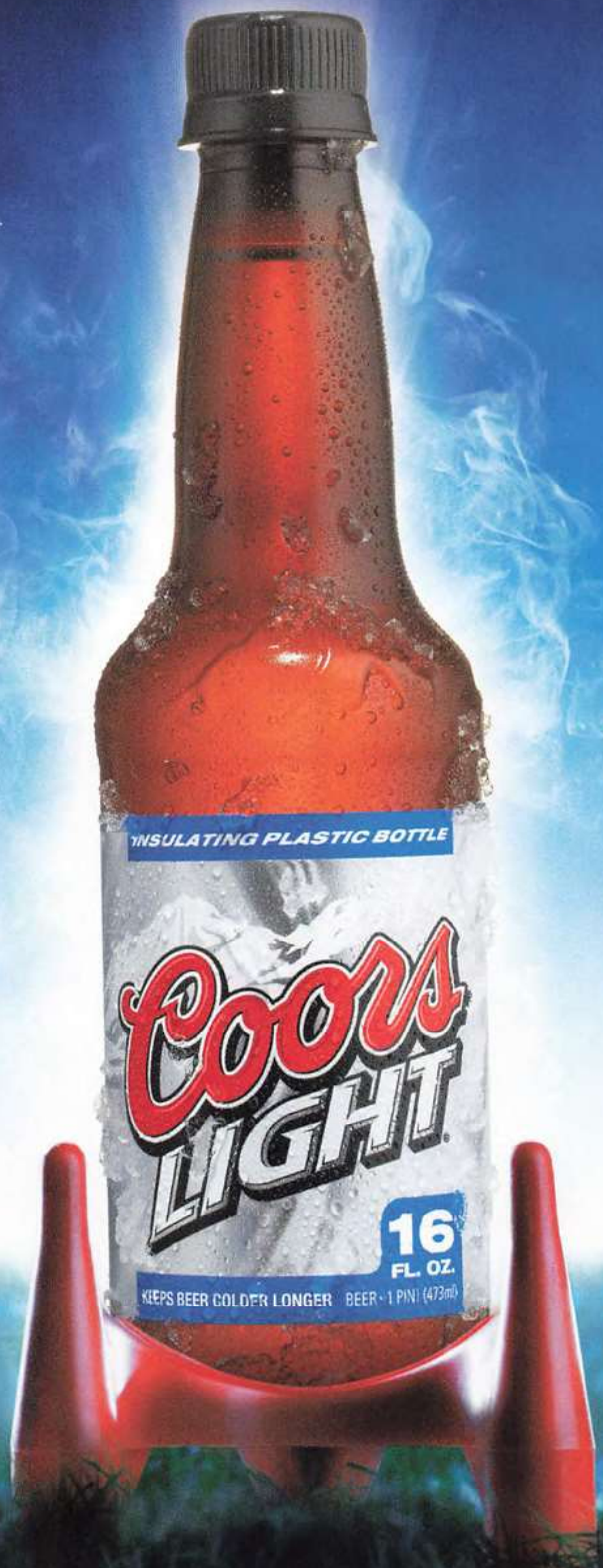
EVEN IN ARIZONA.



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OPEN FOR EXPLORATION!

Before or after the big game, there are plenty of places to go on your visit to Arizona. Here's a sampling of the historical, cultural, and recreational offerings in and around the Grand Canyon State:

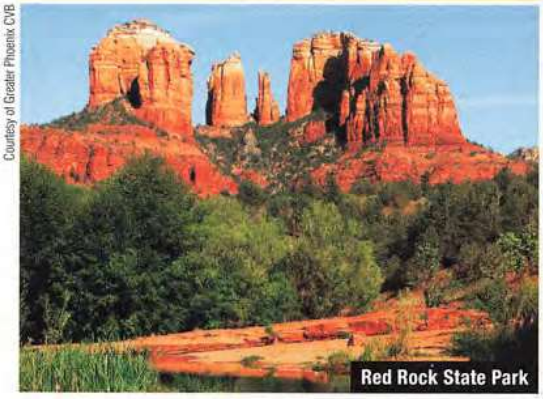
- **Arboretum at Flagstaff** (www.thearb.org) A 200-acre botanical garden with one of America's largest collections of high country wildflowers.
- **Arizona Center** (www.coppersquare.com) Located in Phoenix's Copper Square, this is a sprawling 3.5-acre retail and dining complex.
- **Arizona Railway Museum** (www.azrymuseum.org) This museum in Chandler displays railway equipment, artifacts, and mementos.
- **Arizona Science Center** (www.azscience.org) This Phoenix museum provides hands-on, eye-opening fun with more than 300 interactive exhibits, state-of-the-art planetarium, and live demonstrations.
- **Arizona Sonora Desert Museum** (www.desertmuseum.org) Tour desert paths that lead you to encounters with animals, hummingbirds, boojums, and much more amid the Tucson Mountains.
- **Arizona State Parks** (www.azstateparks.com) Arizona's 27 state parks include conservation, recreation, and historical sites.
- **Desert Caballeros Western Museum** (www.westernmuseum.org) Found in Wickenburg, you'll discover western art, cowboy gear, and Native American arts, plus dioramas from Arizona's territorial era.
- **Downtown Glendale** (www.historic-glendale.net) Nearly 100 specialty and antique shops can be found in this historic district, offering visitors everything from vintage clothing to contemporary art.
- **Grand Canyon National Park** (www.nps.gov/grca) One of the world's seven natural wonders, the Grand Canyon offers spectacular vistas of canyon walls that have been sculpted from the earth over the millennia by the Colorado River.
- **Heard Museum** (www.heard.org) Enjoy a visit to these internationally acclaimed museums that highlight Native American culture with three locations: Phoenix, Surprise (West Valley, near Glendale), and Scottsdale.
- **Kierland Commons** (www.kierlandcommons.com) An upscale retail, restaurant, and commercial complex—regarded as the first "urban village" in the Phoenix area—that is well known for its pedestrian friendliness.
- **Mesa Southwest Museum** (www.ci.mesa.az.us/swmuseum) Explore the Southwest's history from before dinosaurs to the present day.
- **Monument Valley** (www.navajonationparks.org) Freestanding sandstone rock formations rising up to 1,000 feet from the desert floor.
- **Museum of Northern Arizona** (www.musnaz.org) Found in Flagstaff, this museum is a gateway to understanding the richly diverse cultures, landscapes, and ecology of the Colorado Plateau.
- **Petrified Forest National Park** (www.nps.gov/pefo) This park features one of the world's most colorful concentrations of petrified wood.
- **Phoenix Art Museum** (www.phxart.org) The Southwest's largest visual arts museum features more than 16,000 works of art.
- **Phoenix Zoo** (www.phoenixzoo.org/zoo) Home to more than 1,300 animals, including endangered birds, mammals, and reptiles.
- **Pima Air & Space Museum** (www.pimaair.org) Located in Tucson, this museum has a collection of more than 250 aircraft.
- **Saguaro National Park** (www.nps.gov/sagu) This Tucson park boasts 150 miles of hiking trails and guided walking tours.
- **Scottsdale Arts District** (www.scottsdalegalleries.com) Enjoy galleries that appeal to both the serious art collector and casual art appreciator.
- **Tlaquepaque** (www.tlaq.com) Sedona's internationally renowned arts & crafts village provides a distinctive shopping experience.
- **Westgate City Center** (www.westgateaz.com) A dynamic retail project in Glendale built in conjunction with the Glendale Arena.

Courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum

Westgate City Center

Courtesy of Greater Phoenix CVB



Red Rock State Park

Courtesy of Arboretum at Flagstaff

Arboretum at Flagstaff

Arizona Railway Museum

COUNTDOWN TO GAME DAY

Here's a look at several of the *Super Celebration Series of Events* being sponsored by the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee during Super Week. Most are free. Visit www.azsuperbowl.com to learn more.

Scottsdale ArtWalk

David Kadlubowski/The Arizona Republic

Scottsdale Waterfront

Mike Rykeason/The Arizona Republic

SUPER FIESTA ■ Jan. 26 ■ 7 p.m.

Come enjoy the best in Latin music at *Super Fiesta*, a Hispanic music and cultural event at Phoenix's Dodge Theatre, presented by local Spanish language pop station Super Estrella 107 FM. This will be Super Bowl XLII's largest celebration of Hispanic heritage and culture, and will showcase Arizona's diversity. Mexican pop superstar Alejandra Guzman headlines the event that will include a lineup of artists from Latin music genres such as Mariachi, Regional Mexican, Cumbia, and Latin Pop.

ARIZONA-SONORA BOWL II ■ Jan. 27 ■ 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Some of Arizona's most talented young athletes will go helmet to helmet with the best of Sonora, Mexico, in the Arizona-Sonora Bowl II, a football showdown at Copper Canyon High School in Glendale. Game time is set for 3 p.m., and the day-long free event also will feature an international youth football clinic, a Family Fair, and appearances by NFL players. Funds raised throughout the day will benefit the Sports Ad-Hoc Committee of the Arizona-Mexico Commission, which serves to foster cultural, physical, and personal growth among children and teenagers through sports exchange between Arizona and Mexico.

SCOTTSDALE SUPER ARTWALK ■ Feb. 2 ■ Noon to 5 p.m.

The internationally acclaimed *Scottsdale ArtWalk*, to be held the day before Super Bowl XLII and themed and produced in honor of the game, will spread across several blocks in the Scottsdale Arts District. Dozens of fine art galleries will open their doors to the public, host receptions, and showcase new exhibits. Visitors also will be treated to a festival-like atmosphere throughout the afternoon with several outdoor live music areas, multiple food sampling stations, prize drawings, and more.

944 PARTY ■ Feb. 2 ■ 6 p.m.

On the eve of Super Bowl XLII, the 944 Super Village (located along the Scottsdale Waterfront at Stetson Canal) will be home to the *2008 Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee Party*. Actress Juliette Lewis, along with her band The Licks, will perform, as will Velvet Revolver—led by former members of Guns N' Roses and Stone Temple Pilots. For ticket information, log on to www.944game.com/tickets. Throughout Super Week, the 944 Super Village will be open day and night for fans to enjoy live music, food vendors, world-class DJs, fireworks, and more.

THAT'S THE TICKET: Super Week kicks off with big event at the Phoenician Resort.

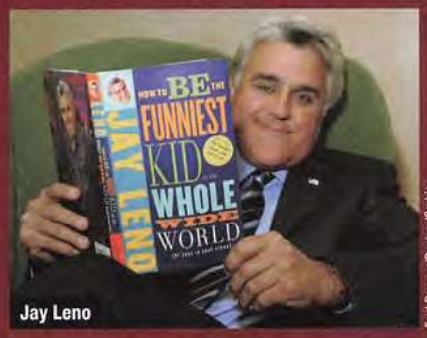
Jay Leno is headlining the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee's *Big Ticket Gala*, a black-tie event taking place Wednesday, Jan. 30, at the Phoenician Resort in Scottsdale. The event runs from 6 p.m.-10 p.m.

"We are thrilled that Jay will be joining us for our Big Ticket Gala," says Host Committee president Bob Sullivan. "From the first moment we began planning this event, we felt he would be the ideal person to have as the headline entertainment. Jay is the definition of an entertainer, and he will certainly help make it a memorable evening."

Leno, in his 16th season as host of NBC's *The Tonight Show* and a renowned sports fan, was part of Super Bowl XXX in Arizona, filming several episodes of his program in the state during Super Bowl week.

ESPN anchor Chris Berman will emcee the Gala and help honor the 20 Pro Football Hall of Famers expected to be in attendance. The Gala will showcase the Hall of Fame's traveling exhibit of football memorabilia and will include a live and silent auction, featuring a Harley Davidson motorcycle autographed by all the celebrities in attendance. Proceeds from the evening will benefit the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee and the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Tickets and information are available by emailing bigticket@azsuperbowl.com.



Jay Leno

Fred Prouser/Reuters/Corbis

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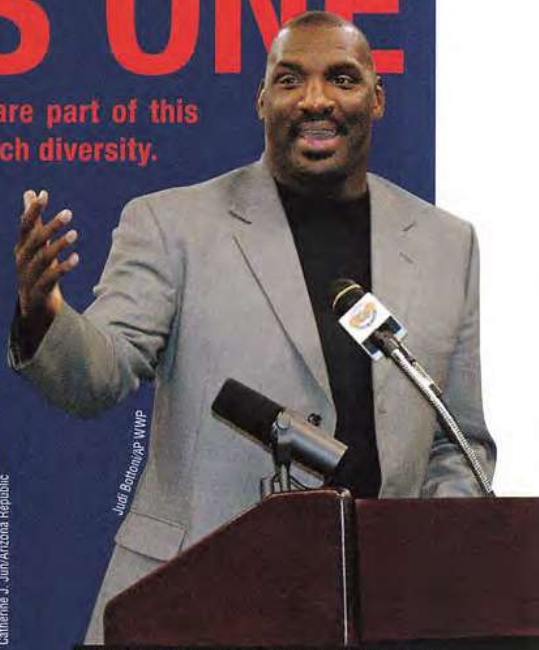
WORKING AS ONE

Business outreach, youth involvement, and good old-fashioned fun are part of this year's *NFL Community Impact Program*, which will display Arizona's rich diversity.

Catherine J. Jun/Arizona Republic

Writing to pen-pals is part of the One World program.



Judi Bottoni/AP WWP

Doug Williams – Leadership Forum speaker

SB XLII PLAYBOOK FOR SMALL BUSINESS WORKSHOP SERIES

More than 900 small, minority, and women business owners participated in the NFL's *Super Bowl Playbook for Small Business Workshop Series*.

These four free developmental workshops were held in December and January throughout the state. They were designed to help small and minority business owners, women executives, entrepreneurs, and young business leaders develop and launch new strategies, learn to use multicultural and mainstream marketing to boost sales, understand and integrate technology into the workplace, and grow stronger client bases while planning their company's future.

For more information on the series, visit www.superbowlbiz.com.

SUPER BOWL XLII BUSINESS LEADERSHIP FORUM

Nearly 500 small business owners and up-and-coming executives have been invited to the *Super Bowl XLII Business Leadership Forum*, taking place Jan. 31 at the Phoenician Resort.

Doug Williams, MVP of Super Bowl XXII, will be the keynote speaker at the program, which also will include a lively and unscripted business roundtable discussion with national business leaders. The panel discussion will examine the business strategies that have helped raise business leaders from the ranks of small business owners to multi-million dollar corporate leaders.

ONE WORLD ARIZONA

The NFL, working with educational leader Scholastic, has created an Arizona Super Bowl Edition of its nationally acclaimed *One World: Connecting Communities, Cultures, and Classrooms* program. The in-class initiative is designed to encourage respect and strengthen the connections among students from diverse communities, while teaching youth to recognize the choices they make about themselves and others can make a difference in the world.

Working with elementary schools in Phoenix and surrounding communities, the NFL identified 10 fifth-grade classrooms to participate in the program. In addition to implementing diversity-themed lesson plans, each classroom was paired with a school from another community through a pen-pal relationship. Matches were made to pair students with peers of varying racial/ethnic backgrounds to break down any racial barriers and to help youngsters throughout the state understand how much they have in common.

Participating students have been invited to an event during Super Bowl week, where they'll meet their pen-pals for the first time.

PLAY 60 ARIZONA

The Arizona Super Bowl edition of the *NFL Play 60* program saw teachers and kids throughout the state work together to design plans to incorporate 60 minutes of physical activity into every child's day—30 minutes in school and 30 minutes after school. Classrooms submitting activity plans that were the most creative and practical—and who successfully implemented these plans—were eligible to win physical education equipment grants and other Super Bowl-related prizes. With the help of Scholastic and Action for Healthy Kids Arizona, more than 10,000 fifth and sixth grade classes were introduced to this initiative.

NFL Kids' Day at the NFL Experience, on Wednesday, Jan. 30, is serving as the official Super Bowl platform to communicate the *NFL Play 60* fitness message.

CHARACTER BREAKFAST

NFL players and Nickelodeon characters are visiting the Clarendon Elementary School in Phoenix on Thursday, Jan. 31, to help kids understand the importance of eating a healthy, well-balanced breakfast. More than 800 kindergarten through sixth graders will enjoy breakfast with the players and characters, followed by the school's 150 fifth graders taking part in an exercise program.

EXPERIENCE A FUN-FOR-ALL

Fans of all ages are invited to attend the 17th annual NFL Experience, which opens Jan. 26 adjacent to University of Phoenix Stadium.

The NFL Experience Built by The Home Depot is the most exciting continuous event surrounding Super Bowl XLII. It's pro football's interactive theme park, encompassing 850,000 square feet of participatory games, skill competitions, displays, entertainment attractions, kids' clinics, free autograph sessions featuring past and present NFL stars, and the Topps Super Bowl Card Show, the largest football card show ever held.

All games and attractions are included in the ticket price ($17.50 for adults; $12.50 for children 12-and-under) and gate proceeds are being donated toward the NFL's Youth Education Town initiative in Arizona.

Among the many attractions are: autograph sessions with more than 50 NFL superstars; Coaches Chats, where NFL coaches give an insider's look at the game; and live programming by NFL Network. Clinics include NFL Football 101, which will discuss rules of the game, and NFL Punt, Pass & Kick Clinics on Clinic Field, where boys and girls ages 8-12 can learn the core skills essential to football success. There also will be player readings, where NFL players will read books to youngsters in the Kids Zone.

Tentative hours for The NFL Experience are: Jan. 26 (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.); Jan. 27 (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.); Jan. 31 (3 p.m. to 10 p.m.); Feb. 1 (3 p.m. to 10 p.m.); and Feb. 2 (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.). On Feb. 3, the park is open to Super Bowl XLII ticket holders only.

Tickets are available through www.superbowl.com or by calling (866) 849-4635. Beginning on Jan. 26, they can be purchased at the gate during operating hours. Tickets are sold for a specific date and time, but fans can stay in the park for as long as they wish.

Spike, the Host Committee's team captain for Super Bowl XLII, will make the last of his 42 stops across Arizona at the grand opening of The NFL Experience. After marching into the theme park, he will spend the day with fans at his Game Ball Road Trip booth. Spike will make appearances at the park each day and be available for photos and autographs.

Kevin Terrell/Wirelmage/Getty Images

Kevin Terrell/Wirelmage/Getty Images

Michael Conroy/AP WWP

LEARNING THE GAME

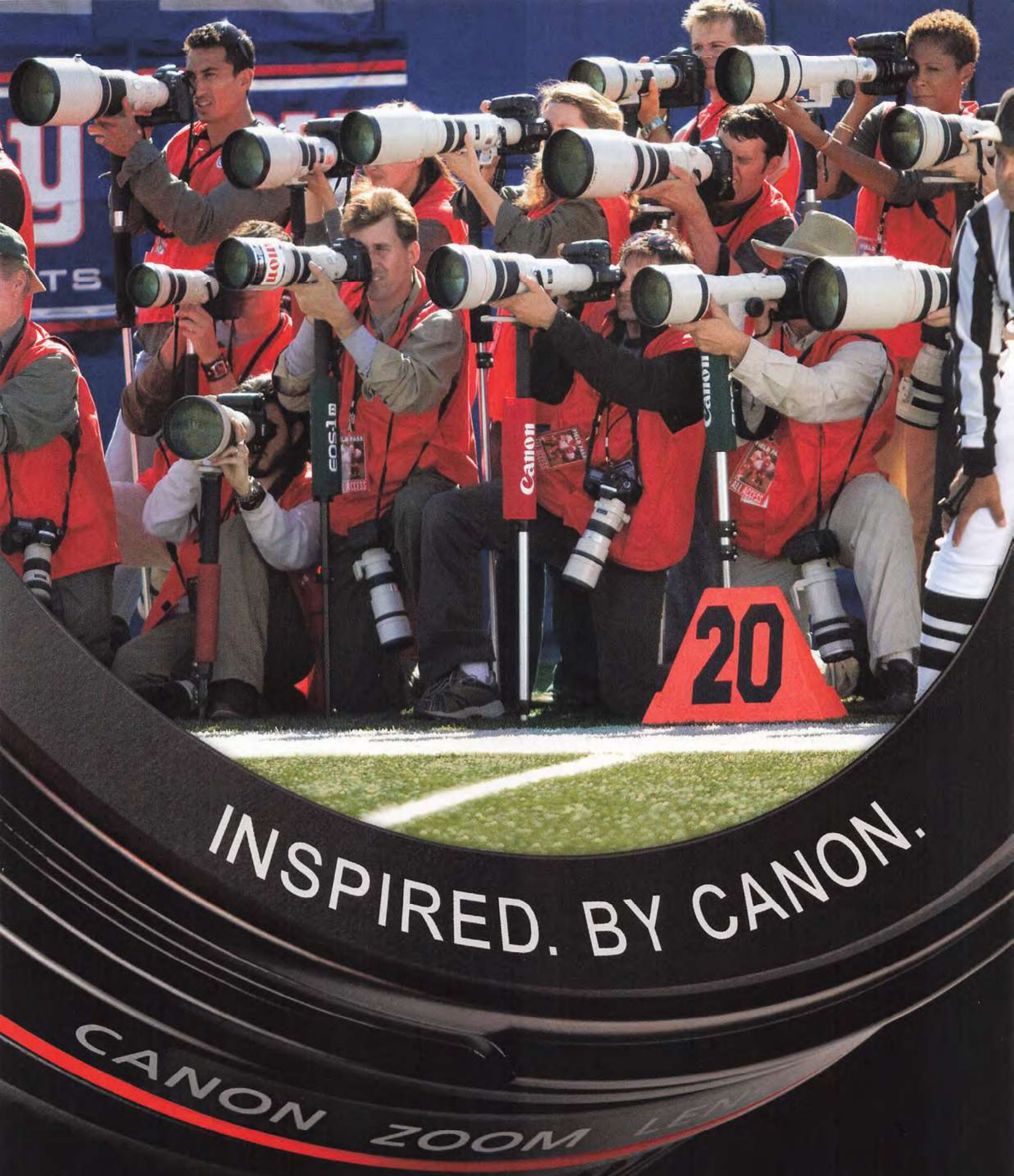
The NFL Youth Football Program celebrates its 20th anniversary with state-wide clinics.

Nearly 20,000 boys and girls ages 7-14, as well as Special Olympics Arizona athletes, are taking part in *NFL Youth Football Clinics* in the weeks leading up to Super Bowl XLII. Kids are learning fundamentals, along with the importance of sportsmanship and teamwork, from NFL players and youth coaches.

The final clinics are being held Saturday, Jan. 26, at the Reach 11 Sports Complex in Phoenix, and Sunday, Jan. 27, at the Snedigar Sports Complex in Chandler.

For more information on this and other NFL Youth Football programs, visit www.nflyouthfootball.com.

Matt Kryger/Wirelmage/Getty Images



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AN ENVIRONMENT OF FUN & CARING

Photos courtesy of NFL Environmental Program

The *NFL Environmental Program* has developed a series of initiatives to reduce the impact of Super Bowl activities on the local and global environment.

All environmental initiatives are being implemented in partnership with the Arizona Super Bowl XLII Host Committee as well as other local, state, and national organizations. These initiatives include:

- Comprehensive solid waste management projects at major NFL event facilities, diverting waste from local landfills through recycling and reuse of potential waste materials. Targeted sites include University of Phoenix Stadium and the NFL Experience Football Theme Park.
- Collection and donation of extra prepared food from Super Bowl events. The NFL will work in partnership with Waste Not, a local food recovery organization, and other area food banks.
- Recovery and donation of decorative materials, building materials, office supplies, and other reusable items to local nonprofit organizations. The local United Way chapter is arranging for distribution, while local participant, Dircks Moving, is handling collections of donated items.
- The Super Kids-Super Sharing Sports Equipment and Book Donation project developed in partnership with the Arizona Cardinals, the NFL Youth Education Town, and more than 50 local schools. Items will be donated to schools and youth organizations throughout the area.
- Use of renewable energy at University of Phoenix Stadium and the NFL Experience Football Theme Park. Local utility Salt River Project is providing wind, solar, geothermal, and landfill gas energy at these sites.
- Reforestation projects at Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and the White Mountain Apache Reservation—areas devastated by wildfires five years ago. Seven school campuses are serving as urban forestry project sites. The United States Forest Service, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Salt River Project, the Arizona Cardinals, the Home Depot Foundation, and RBF Consulting are supporting these forestry projects.

BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE

Rebuilding Together is again teaming with the NFL to make a difference in the Super Bowl host city. On Friday, Feb. 1, the 13th Annual *Kickoff to Rebuild* will bring volunteers and sponsors together under the leadership of Rebuilding Together Valley of the Sun to provide much-needed assistance to a community center and a private home.

The projects are The Valley Christian Center and the home of Mrs. Ella Hennix, a long-time Valley Christian Center volunteer. The center was founded in 1919 to serve the Valley's immigrant population, providing food, clothing, utility payment support, and education assistance. Along with national title sponsor the American Petroleum Institute, a team of regional and national businesses and community volunteers will join Rebuilding Together to renovate and repair the center and Mrs. Hennix's home.

Rebuilding Together is the nation's largest nonprofit organization working to preserve affordable home ownership and neighborhoods by providing rehabilitation services free of charge to those in need.

Rebuilding Together serves homeowners in 1800 communities through the work of more than 225 affiliates nationwide.

For more information or to make a donation, please visit www.RebuildingTogether.org or call 1-800-4-REHAB-9.

Courtesy of Rebuilding Together

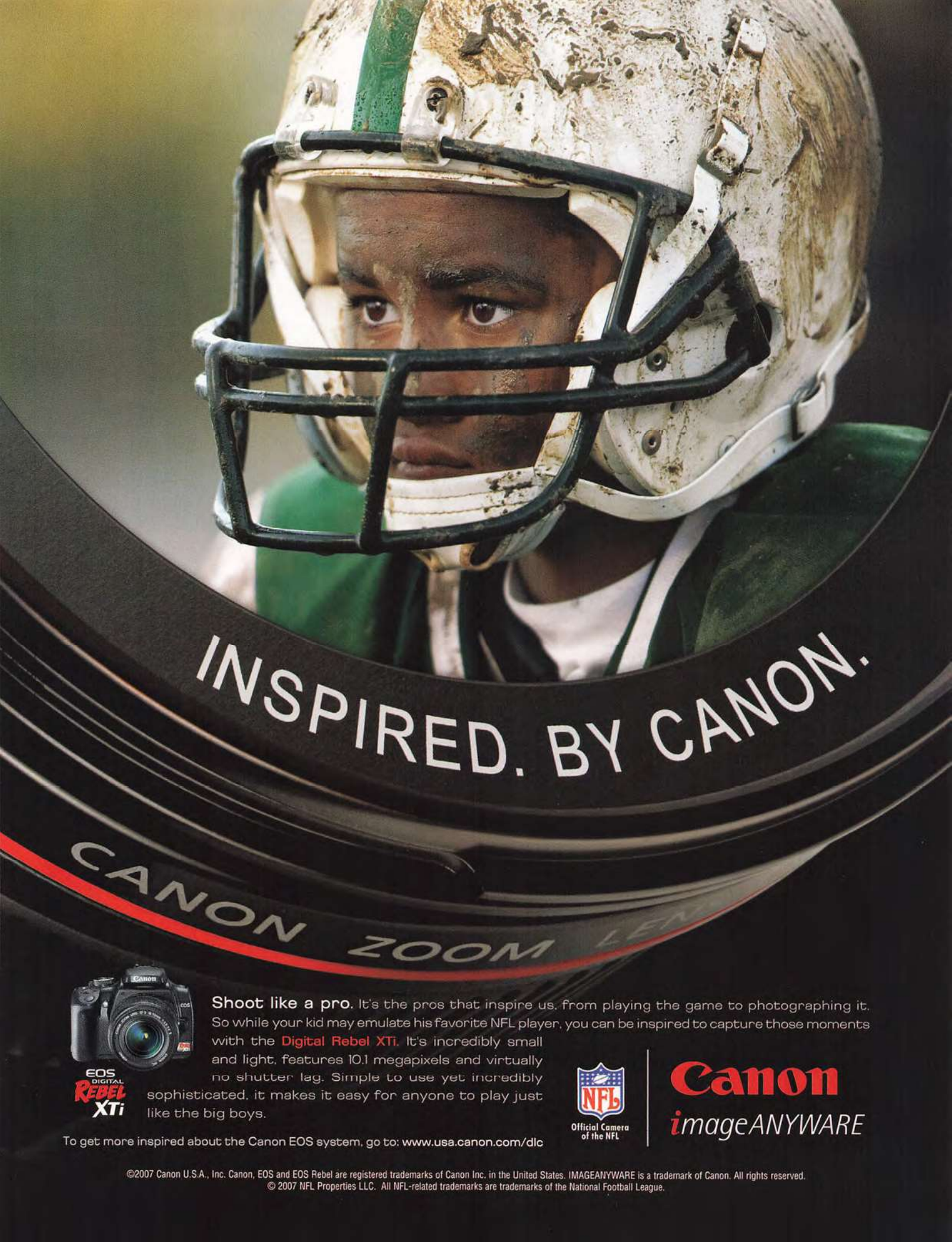
MAKE A SUPER CANSTRUCTION

It's a team effort to tackle hunger one can at a time.

The Super Bowl Host Committee, Safeway, and Westcor are pooling their efforts for a unique Super Bowl-inspired canned food drive: *Super Canstruction.*

Valley architectural, engineering, and construction firms will be at two locations designing and building football themed structures made of donated canned foods, including a replica of University of Phoenix Stadium. Safeway will match the donations and, at the exhibit's closing, all cans used will be donated to local food banks.

It all takes place Jan. 31 at Chandler Fashion Center (Loop 101 & Chandler Blvd.) and the Glendale Arrowhead Towne Center (75th Ave. & Bell Rd).



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To get more inspired about the Canon EOS system, go to: **www.usa.canon.com/dlc**

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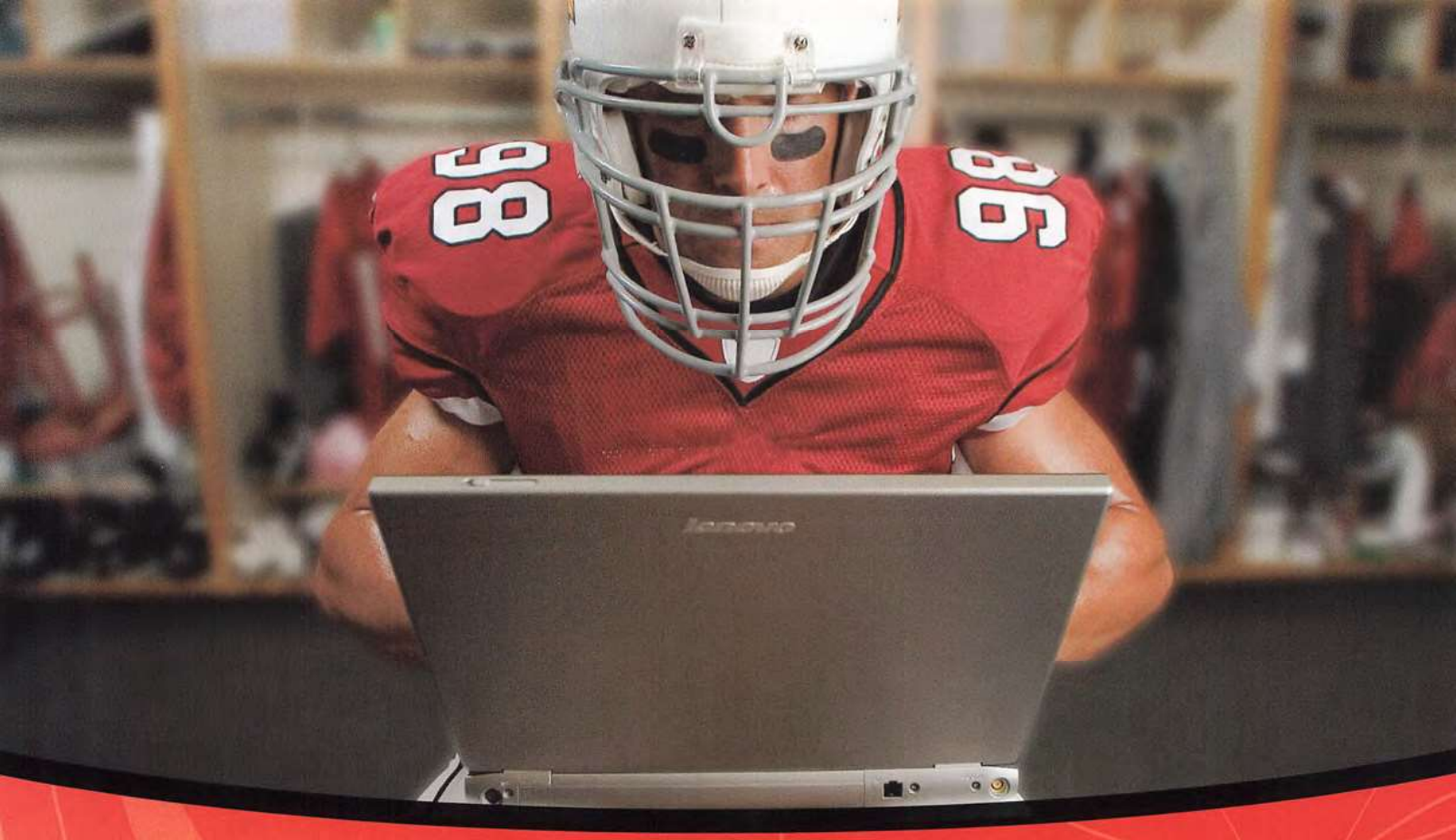

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Taste of the NFL/Tom Donoghue

Cardinals WR Larry Fitzgerald w/Chef Eddie Matney

A MENU OF HOPE

Taste of the NFL takes place on Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Phoenix Convention Center.

Known as The Party with a Purpose®, Taste of the NFL is the five-star food and wine tasting extravaganza held annually on the eve of the Super Bowl in the host city. The event features a top chef from each NFL city paired with an alumnus or current player from each team.

Started in 1992, it has raised more than $6.8 million for hunger-related charities. A portion of the funds raised are distributed to members of America's Second Harvest—the nation's food bank network in NFL cities. St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance in Phoenix and United Food Bank in Mesa will be the local beneficiaries.

The night includes a silent auction and live entertainment. To learn more, visit www.tasteofthenfl.com.

Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images

Lynn Swann at last year's NFL Charities Celebrity Bowling Classic

HELPING HAND

Two NFL Charities events set for Super Week will bring together some of football's biggest names to help raise charitable funds.

The third annual *Super Bowl NFL Charities Celebrity Bowling Classic* is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 31, at the AMF Christown Lanes in Phoenix. On Saturday, Feb. 2, the 23rd annual *Super Bowl NFL Charities Celebrity Golf Classic* tees off at the famous Wigwam Golf Resort in Litchfield Park. The events are expected to raise more than $250,000 to benefit the league's Youth Education Town initiative in Arizona.

Both events include current and former NFL players—among them members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame—heading up teams of amateur bowlers and golfers.

The bowling classic, sponsored by Strike Ten, will have teams of five amateurs bowling three games, each with a different celebrity. The entry fee is a $500 donation to NFL Charities. At the golf classic, a celebrity captain will be assigned to each fivesome of amateur golfers. The entry fee for this event is a $1500 donation to NFL Charities.

Prior to these events, more than two dozen boys and girls from the Phoenix YET Center are taking part in a bowling clinic featuring NFL stars and professional bowlers.

For more information on these and other NFL Charities activities, contact tournament director Nick Nicolosi at n.nicolosi@verizon.net.

TEENS CARING FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

America's teens are transforming Super Bowl weekend into the nation's largest youth-led weekend of giving and serving through the *Souper Bowl of Caring.*

On Super Bowl Sunday, teens all across the country—armed with soup pots—take up collections for hunger relief at churches, schools, and businesses by asking for $1 donations. Every dollar raised is given to local charities as selected by each group. Since 1990, hundreds of thousands of young people have participated and collected more than $41 million. Last year's event raised more than $8 million during Super Bowl XLI weekend.

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a national service movement endorsed by multiple NFL owners. For more information, visit www.souperbowl.org.

Courtesy of Souper Bowl of Caring

SEE THEM IN CONCERT

MÚSICA SUPER BOWL FIESTA

RBD® Televisa, S.A. de C.V.

RBD is performing on Friday evening.

The NFL and Pepsi are again teaming up to present the *Pepsi Smash Super Bowl Concert Series*, featuring two nights of sold-out shows at Jobing.com Arena in Glendale.

Highlights from the Thursday, Jan. 31 concert—featuring Mary J. Blige and two-time Grammy Award winner Maroon 5, along with appearances from many NFL stars—will air Feb. 2 at 9 p.m. on VH-1.

The Friday, Feb. 1 show—headlined by RBD and including Latin music stars Camila and Belinda—will be shown on Telemundo on Feb. 2 at 3 p.m.

John Shearer/WireImage/Getty Images

Mary J. Blige headlines Thursday night's show.

A MUSICAL CALLING

The 9th annual *Super Bowl Gospel Celebration*, one of the week's most popular events, is set for Phoenix's Symphony Hall.

The Super Bowl Gospel Celebration is a fusion of inspirational music from the biggest names in the music industry and soul-stirring testimonies from top NFL players. This year's event, on Friday, Feb. 1, will showcase the all-new NFL Player All-Star Choir. The musical line-up features Patti LaBelle, CeCe Winans, and Donnie McClurkin, as well as surprise guest acts.

In its ninth year, the Super Bowl Gospel Celebration is the first and only gospel event sanctioned by the NFL for Super Bowl weekend. It also serves as a fundraiser with a portion of the proceeds benefiting local and national charities. Last year, the event was ranked as one of the "top 3 must see events during Super Bowl Weekend" by *USA Today*.

For more information on this year's Gospel Celebration, visit www.superbowlgospelcelebration.com.

Donnie McClurkin

CeCe Winans

Patti LaBelle

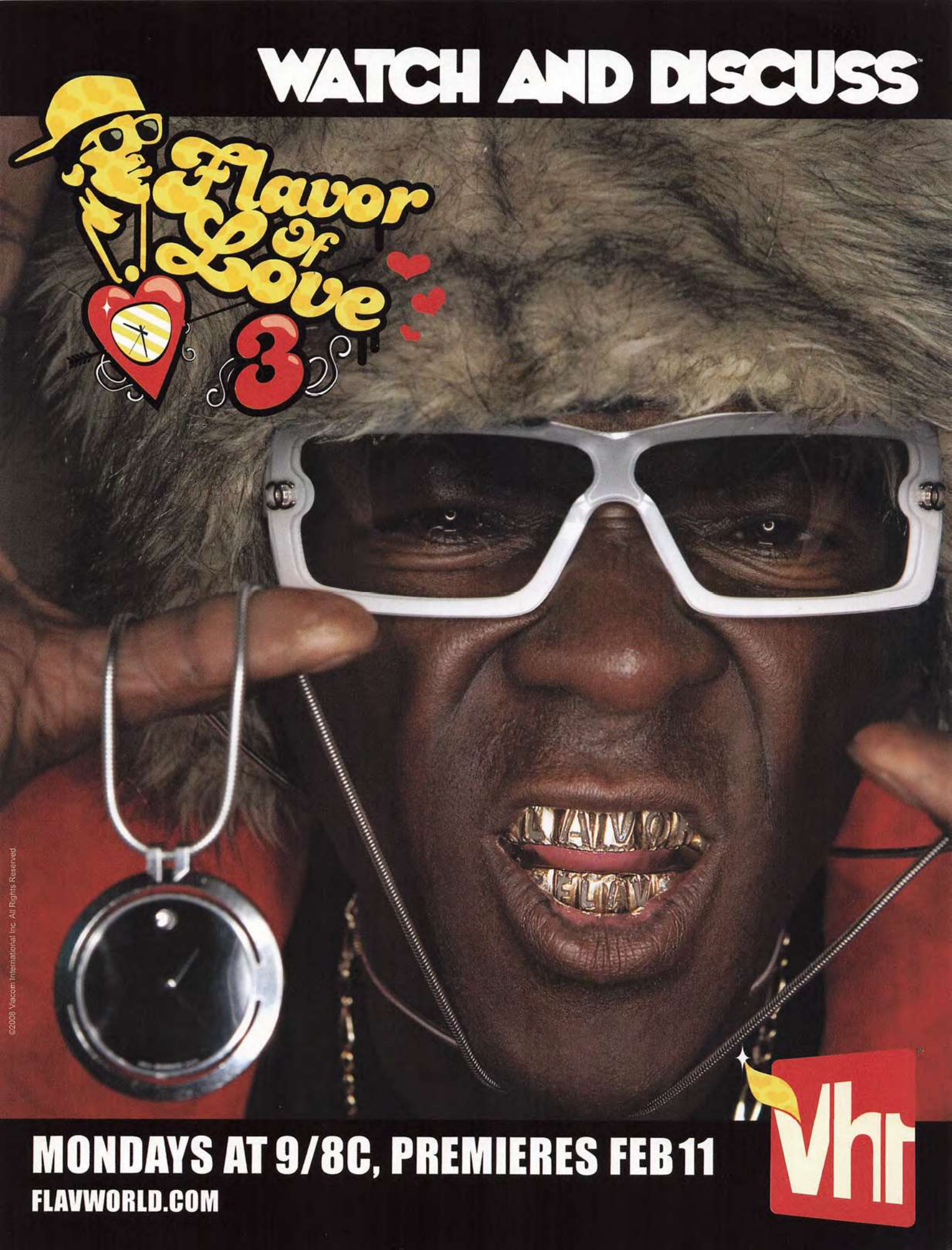
Left to right: Brett Flashnick/AP WWP; Lester Cohen/WireImage/Getty Images; Jordan Strauss/WireImage/Getty Images

SUPER BOWL SATURDAY NIGHT

CELEBRATING ON SATURDAY

Everyone is invited to attend *Super Bowl Saturday Night* on Feb. 2, starting at 6 p.m.

Come enjoy this special family event commemorating an exciting year of NFL football and celebrating the arrival of Super Bowl XLII. Thousands of fans will join in the festivities at Tempe Town Lake, nestled in the heart of downtown Tempe—steps away from the shops and restaurants in the city's Mill Avenue District. A free live concert will be followed by a fireworks show over the lake.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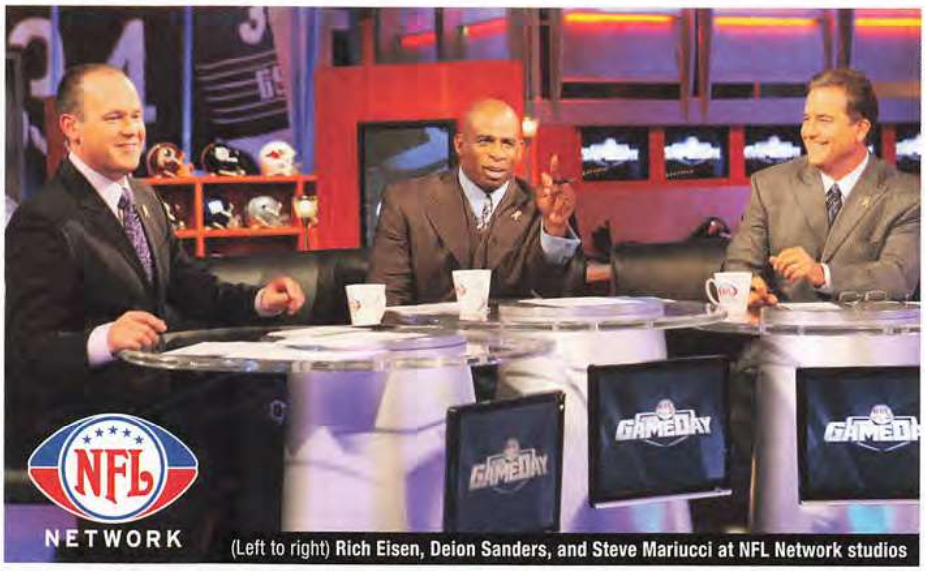
NETWORKING NFL STYLE

Anyone with NFL Network knows the celebration of Super Bowl XLII begins well before the two teams meet on the field on Feb. 3.



Courtesy of NFL Network

(Left to right) **Rich Eisen, Deion Sanders, and Steve Mariucci at NFL Network studios**

NFL Network will be on site in Arizona beginning Jan. 27, priming football fans with more than 50 hours of original programming that will complete the Super Bowl experience.

"NFL Network continues to follow through on its promise to deliver football coverage 24-7, year round and particularly during Super Bowl week," says NFL Network executive producer Eric Weinberger. "This year, the site of the NFL Experience will serve as a primary location of various NFL Network programs and sets, giving fans inside and outside of Glendale the opportunity to see, hear, and feel what makes Super Bowl week special."

Super Bowl XLII marks NFL Network's fifth telecast from the site of the Super Bowl and is shaping up as its biggest to date. In addition to live telecasts of NFL Network original programming such as *NFL Total Access, Playbook*, *Put Up Your Dukes*, and *Who Is...?*, fans will truly get the "total access" they expect from NFL Network with live coverage of team arrivals, daily coverage from both AFC and NFC team hotels, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's Super Bowl press conference, the Pro Football Hall of Fame's announcement of new inductees, and the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award. All programming from Arizona is available in high-definition.

The network's on-air roster in Arizona includes: Rich Eisen, Deion Sanders, Steve Mariucci, Marshall Faulk, Adam Schefter, Jamie Dukes, Brian Baldinger, Sterling Sharpe, Rod Woodson, Terrell Davis, and Jim Mora.

On Super Bowl Sunday, NFL Network takes fans through the big day with special programs and expanded pregame and postgame coverage from University of Phoenix Stadium.

During 2007, NFL Network had live broadcasts of seven NFL regular-season games, several NFL preseason contests, and college football's Texas Bowl and Insight Bowl.

AD-ING UP WHO WANTS IT MORE

The NFL once again asked fans to pick the pitch that will become its Super Bowl commercial.

But instead of having fans present ideas, as happened last year, NFL players went head-to-head with their ideas for the Super Bowl XLII advertisement.

As part of the *Super Ad: Who Wants It More* promotion, NFL Films traveled to all 32 team headquarters in a customized NFL–themed tractor-trailer to capture the players' stories. Fans then had the opportunity to hear these unique tales and get an exclusive look at some of their favorite NFL players.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL. HERE ARE THE MEN UNDER THE HELMET
Meet the dedicated. Meet the profound. Meet the zany. Meet them all.
Then, help us choose which of their stories would make the best NFL Super Bowl commercial. We're counting on you to help us make a Super Ad.
GET STARTED
MEET THE MEN UNDER THE HELMET

Among the pitches were: the Patriots' Rosevelt Colvin, who confessed he got lost on his way to his first mini-camp and arrived with two minutes to spare drenched in sweat; the Seahawks' Matt Hasselbeck, who talked about the first time he received fan mail only to discover it was from someone who wanted Hasselbeck to get him an autograph from Brett Favre; and the Cowboys' Jason Witten, who admitted he neglected to bring donuts to a team meeting, causing the offensive line to tie him to the goal post and pour ice on him.

The ideas were posted on www.nfl.com/superad with a fan vote and a panel of judges selecting the winner out of nine finalists. Fans who voted were also entered in a sweepstakes for a chance to win a trip to Super Bowl XLII.

Joe Pytka, the filmmaker and award-winning director of numerous TV commercials (including last year's critically acclaimed NFL spot), directed the commercial made from the winning pitch that will run during Super Bowl XLII. The player submitting the winning pitch will be featured in the spot.

FOX SPORTS COVERAGE

The 14th season of the NFL on FOX comes to an exciting conclusion with the exclusive live presentation of Super Bowl XLII.

Courtesy of FOX Sports

(left to right) **The FOX football team: Oliver, Bradshaw, Johnson, Long, Buck, Aikman, and Menefee**

This marks the network's fifth Super Bowl broadcast and the second Super Bowl assignment for Emmy Award-winning play-by-play broadcaster Joe Buck and Hall of Fame and three-time Super Bowl-winning quarterback Troy Aikman. Pam Oliver and Chris Myers serve as pregame and in-game reporters.

FOX Sports' coverage begins at 2 p.m. ET from University of Phoenix Stadium with *FOX Super Bowl Sunday*, the Super Bowl XLII pregame show. Co-hosts Curt Menefee and Terry Bradshaw join analysts Howie Long and Jimmy Johnson for up-to-the-minute news and features leading up to kickoff.

Ryan Seacrest, host of the nation's No. 1 television series, FOX's *American Idol*, serves as entertainment host for *FOX Super Bowl Sunday*. Seacrest quarterbacks the red carpet, interviewing the numerous celebrities who annually attend the biggest event on the sports calendar. *FOX NFL Sunday* Insider Jay Glazer, weather prognosticator Jillian Reynolds, and comedian Frank Caliendo also contribute to the pregame festivities.

FOX Sports Television Group chairman David Hill and FOX Sports president Ed Goren both serve as the executive producers of FOX Sports and the network's coverage of Super Bowl XLII. Richie Zyontz is the game producer and Artie Kempner directs.

Scott Ackerson is coordinating producer of the *FOX Super Bowl Sunday* pregame show. Bob Levy directs.

ON YOUR RADIO

Courtesy of Westwood One

Boomer Esiason and Marv Albert

WESTWOOD ONE

For the 21st straight year and 35th time overall, Westwood One is serving as the exclusive network radio home of the Super Bowl.

Beginning at 5 p.m. ET, more than 550 stations across America will carry Westwood One's broadcast of Super Bowl XLII. The *Monday Night Football* broadcast team of Marv Albert and Boomer Esiason call their sixth Super Bowl together while John Dockery and Kevin Kiley patrol the sidelines at University of Phoenix Stadium. Jim Gray hosts the pregame, halftime, and postgame shows, and Tommy Tighe kicks off Westwood One's coverage with *Super Bowl Preview* at 3 p.m ET., followed by *Super Sunday* at 4 p.m. ET. Howard Deneroff is executive producer of Super Bowl XLII on Westwood One.

Westwood One is the nation's leader in play-by-play radio sports. In addition to broadcasting 91 regular-season and postseason NFL games, Westwood One's sports lineup includes: the 2008 Summer Olympics; NCAA Football and Basketball, including the Final Four; the NHL, including the Stanley Cup Finals; and the Master's Golf Tournament.

SB XLII EN ESPAÑOL

Courtesy of Univision Radio

Smith Muñiz **Rafa "El Alcalde"**

UNIVISION Radio

Univision Radio is the official Spanish radio partner of the NFL and will broadcast Super Bowl XLII live to America's Spanish-speaking audience.

Univision Radio's sports director Rafael Hernandez Brito "El Alcalde" will handle play-by-play and be joined by Clemson Smith Muñiz on commentary to deliver all the action. Eduardo Martell patrols the sidelines as field reporter and "El Presidente" Fernando Fiore hosts the network's pregame, halftime, and postgame shows.

THE WORLD IS WATCHING

Super Bowl XLII will be seen in 223 countries and territories, and heard in 30 languages.

Nearly 60 international broadcasters are airing the game, which includes 19 television and radio stations (from 14 countries) broadcasting on site.

In the United Kingdom, BBC Sport is, for the first time, showing the Super Bowl live. Canadian fans can catch the game live on CTV, Canada's top-rated conventional television network.

PCCW (Hong Kong), ATV (Hong Kong and mainland China), Star Hub (Singapore), and Goal TV (Pan-Asian region) have joined the growing list of broadcasters in Asia offering comprehensive coverage of Super Bowl XLII.

NFL International is again providing a world feed in standard and high definition for all international broadcast partners. English-speaking countries showing the game will hear Sterling Sharpe and Spiro Dedes call the action.

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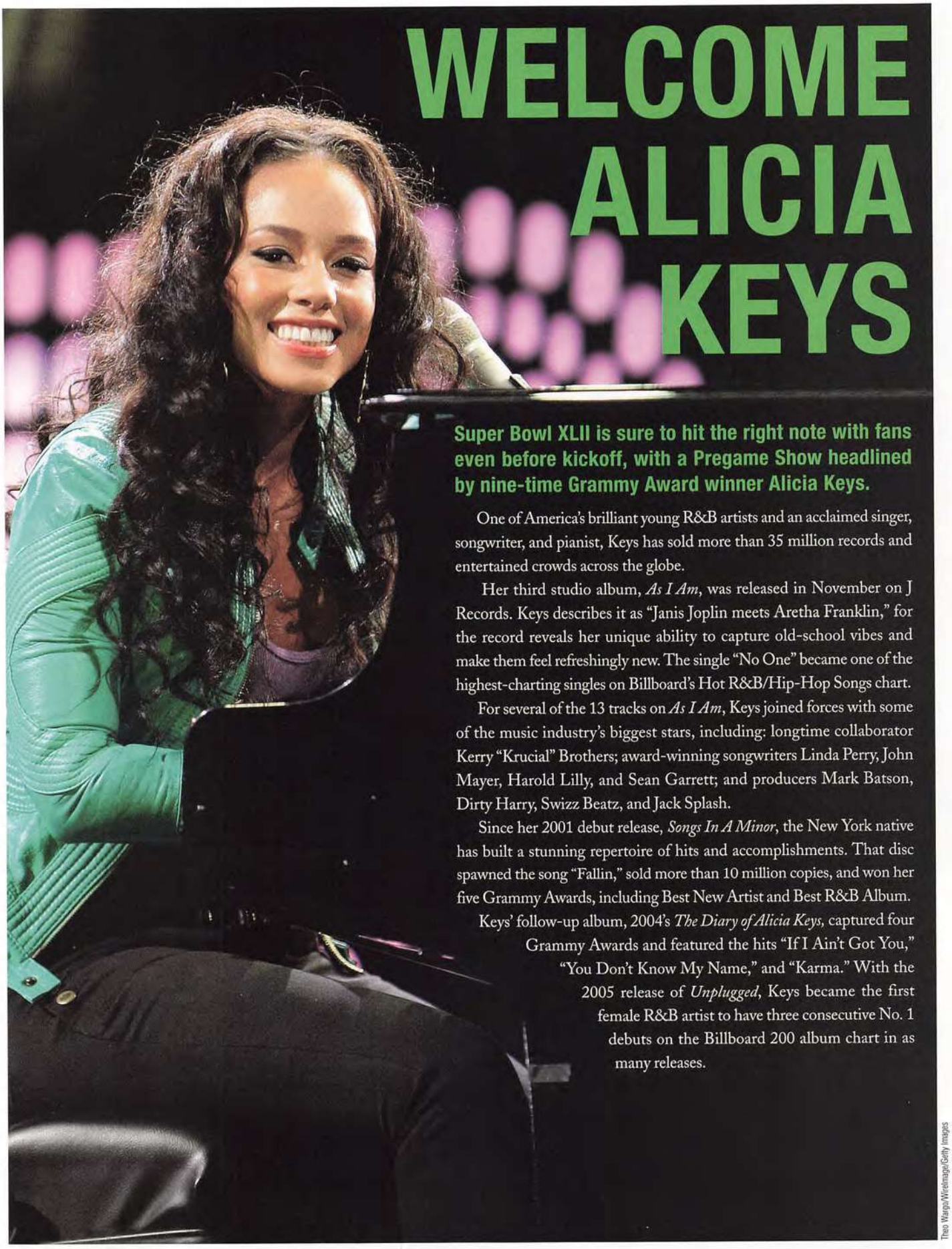
WELCOME ALICIA KEYS



Super Bowl XLII is sure to hit the right note with fans even before kickoff, with a Pregame Show headlined by nine-time Grammy Award winner Alicia Keys.

One of America's brilliant young R&B artists and an acclaimed singer, songwriter, and pianist, Keys has sold more than 35 million records and entertained crowds across the globe.

Her third studio album, *As I Am*, was released in November on J Records. Keys describes it as "Janis Joplin meets Aretha Franklin," for the record reveals her unique ability to capture old-school vibes and make them feel refreshingly new. The single "No One" became one of the highest-charting singles on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart.

For several of the 13 tracks on *As I Am*, Keys joined forces with some of the music industry's biggest stars, including: longtime collaborator Kerry "Krucial" Brothers; award-winning songwriters Linda Perry, John Mayer, Harold Lilly, and Sean Garrett; and producers Mark Batson, Dirty Harry, Swizz Beatz, and Jack Splash.

Since her 2001 debut release, *Songs In A Minor*, the New York native has built a stunning repertoire of hits and accomplishments. That disc spawned the song "Fallin," sold more than 10 million copies, and won her five Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist and Best R&B Album.

Keys' follow-up album, 2004's *The Diary of Alicia Keys*, captured four Grammy Awards and featured the hits "If I Ain't Got You," "You Don't Know My Name," and "Karma." With the 2005 release of *Unplugged*, Keys became the first female R&B artist to have three consecutive No. 1 debuts on the Billboard 200 album chart in as many releases.

Theo Wargo/Wireimage/Getty Images

CEREMONIES TO HONOR WALSH AND WILLIAMS

At Super Bowl XLII, the NFL will honor the legacy of coaching legend Bill Walsh and the watershed achievement of QB Doug Williams.

Jonathan Ferrey/Getty Images

Ronnie Lott

Walsh, who passed away last July at the age of 75, will be saluted when his son Craig and daughter Elizabeth, along with former San Francisco 49ers captains Ronnie Lott, Jerry Rice, and Steve Young—who all starred under Walsh—take to the field for the pregame coin toss.

Among the most influential figures in NFL history, Walsh revolutionized the game with his "West Coast Offense" and led the 49ers to three Super Bowl victories. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1993. In addition to his on-field achievements, he is remembered for helping the league on many important initiatives, from improving opportunities for minorities in coaching and the front office to its executive training and international development programs.

Past Super Bowl coin toss participants include: former Presidents Ronald Reagan (from the Oval Office in 1985) and George H.W. Bush; Marie Lombardi, wife of Vince Lombardi; and Pro Football Hall of Famers Earl Campbell, Frank Gifford, George Halas, Don Hutson, Tom Landry, Bronko Nagurski, Alan Page, and Art Shell.

Following the game, Doug Williams—MVP of Super Bowl XXII and the first African-American quarterback to both start and win a Super Bowl—will present the Vince Lombardi Trophy to the winning team. It was 20 years ago when Williams led the Washington Redskins to a 42-10 win over the Denver Broncos, throwing four second-quarter touchdown passes and helping his team set Super Bowl records for points in a half and total offense.

Williams joins the ranks of Pro Football Hall of Fame members Don Shula and Bart Starr as legends saluted during the Lombardi Trophy ceremony.

HOMETOWN "IDOL" WINNER TO SING ANTHEM

Glendale's own Jordin Sparks, last year's winner of *American Idol*, will perform the national anthem in front of a Super Bowl audience.

Lisa Blumenfeld/Getty Images

Jordin Sparks

In May 2007, at age 17, Sparks became the youngest winner in *American Idol* history. She already has recorded two top-40 hits—"This Is My Now" and "Tattoo"—and her self-titled debut album was released in November by 19 Recordings/Jive Records.

Sparks has won over fans with her ability to wrap herself around a song, revealing a knack for storytelling while unleashing a wide range of musical emotions. "All my favorite artists, whether contemporary or classic, have had a way of making that certain song their own," she says.

Her father, Phillippi, was an NFL cornerback with the New York Giants and Dallas Cowboys, providing Sparks a lifelong connection to the league. She also has a connection to Arizona, having been born and raised in Phoenix and currently residing in Glendale. This will mark Sparks' fourth time singing the national anthem prior to an NFL game.

Courtesy of NFL

PRESENTING THE GAME BALL...

It's the closest that any fan will come to playing in this year's big game. A lucky youngster age 6-15 will carry the game ball onto the field and hand it to the game official prior to the kickoff of Super Bowl XLII.

Kids who logged on to NFLRUSH.com and took the "NFL Play 60 Challenge" had the chance to win this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The winner was selected at random from tens of thousands of entrants.

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TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS...*LIVE!*

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, America's signature rock 'n' roll band and one of the most successful and exciting touring acts in the music business, will perform in the *Bridgestone Super Bowl XLII Halftime Show* at University of Phoenix Stadium.

Since the release of their self-titled debut album in 1976, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers have sold more than 50 million records and received 18 Grammy nominations. Petty has been honored with several lifetime achievement awards, including Billboard's Century Award and MTV's Video Vanguard Award, and in 2002 the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Petty is responsible for one of the richest deposits in the history of American song, including "Breakdown" (the band's first Top 40 hit), "Don't Do Me Like That" (which climbed to No. 10), and "Free Fallin'" (No. 7), along with well-known classics "Refugee," "I Won't Back Down," "Mary Jane's Last Dance," "American Girl," "Don't Come Around Here No More," "The Waiting," "Runnin' Down A Dream" and others.

For young bands looking to capture the spirit of American rock 'n' roll at its best, the Heartbreakers are the gold standard. The band's story, captured in Peter Bogdanovich's documentary, *Runnin' Down A Dream*, is a centerpiece in American musical history.

Petty also was a founding member of The Traveling Wilburys with George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison, and Jeff Lynne. In 1990, he won his first Grammy when their debut album was selected "Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal."

The Bridgestone Super Bowl XLII Halftime Show will be executive produced and directed by White Cherry Entertainment and Don Mischer Productions. The NFL has worked the past four years with both Don Mischer Productions and White Cherry Entertainment on Opening Kickoff and Super Bowl shows. The Super Bowl XLI Halftime Show starring Prince earned the producers two Emmy nominations.

Bridgestone also will sponsor the Super Bowl XLIII Halftime Show from Tampa in 2009.

PREGAME AND HALFTIME PRODUCTION TEAM

The Pregame and Halftime shows are NFL Network productions.

Executive Producers
Don Mischer
Ricky Kirshner
Glenn Weiss

Directed by
Don Mischer

Line Producer
Rob Paine

Production Designer
Bruce Rodgers

Lighting Designers
Bob Dickinson
Bob Barnhart

Associate Producer
Arianne Shean Wert

Pregame Associate Producer
Lisa Geers

Talent Executive
David Paley

Production Manager
Cara Imperato

Lighting Directors
Dave Grill
Matt Firestone
Daniel Reed

Art Directors
Mai Sakai
Sean Dougall

Assistant Art Director
Adam Rowe

Field Cast Choreographer
Kristen Patterson Terry

Charting Choreographer
Jason Olthoff

Staging Supervisors
Tony Hauser
Cap Spence

Technical Manager
Bob Muller

Technical Directors
Eric Becker
David Bernstein

Production Mixer
Ed Greene

Screen Animation
Robb Wagner/
Stimulated, Inc.

Opening Animation
Mighty Dots, Inc.

Rigging Coordinator
Steve Thomas

Pyrotechnics
Ron Smith

Associate Directors
Gregg Gelfand
Jennifer Mischer

Stage Managers
Gary Natoli
Jeffry Gitter
Harve Levine
Arthur Lewis
Vince Poxon
Karen Tasch Weiss

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Augie Max Vargas
Brad Duns

Production Coordinators
Rosanna Del Buono
Bryan Bingham
Lindsay Frail
Amanda McDonough
Stefani Ramirez
Jim Stechschulte

Assistants to the Executive Producers
Sarah Levine
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NEW ENGLAND

PATRIOTS STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Tom Brady	398-578	68.9	4806	50	8	117.2

RUSHING	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Laurence Maroney	185	835	4.5	59	6
Sammy Morris	85	384	4.5	49	3
Kevin Faulk	62	265	4.3	14	0
Heath Evans	34	121	3.6	11	3

RECEIVING	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Wes Welker	112	1175	10.5	42	8
Randy Moss	98	1493	15.2	65	23
Kevin Faulk	47	383	8.1	23	1
Donté Stallworth	46	697	15.2	69	3
Jabar Gaffney	36	449	12.5	56	5
Benjamin Watson	36	389	10.8	35	6
Kyle Brady	9	70	7.8	20	2

TACKLES	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR
Tedy Bruschi	69	30	99	2.0	0
Ty Warren	47	36	83	4.0	3
Adalius Thomas	60	22	82	6.5	0
Mike Vrabel	53	24	77	12.5	0
Junior Seau	55	21	76	3.5	0
James Sanders	60	13	73	0.0	0
Vince Wilfork	42	28	70	2.0	1
Rodney Harrison	52	15	67	2.0	0
Ellis Hobbs	57	6	63	1.0	1
Jarvis Green	35	22	57	6.5	1
Asante Samuel	42	2	44	0.0	0
Randall Gay	30	3	33	0.0	1
Eugene Wilson	26	6	32	0.0	1
Richard Seymour	16	14	30	1.5	0
Rosevelt Colvin	17	11	28	4.0	2

INTERCEPTIONS	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Asante Samuel	6	89	14.8	42	1
Randall Gay	3	52	17.3	31	0
Junior Seau	3	28	9.3	23	0
James Sanders	2	43	21.5	42	0

KICK RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Ellis Hobbs	35	911	26.0	108	1

PUNT RETURNS	Ret	FC	Avg	Long	TD
Wes Welker	25	7	10.0	35	0

PUNTING	No	Avg	Tchbk	In/20	Long
Chris Hanson	44	41.4	6	13	64

FIELD GOALS	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Stephen Gostkowski	21-24	0-0	10-10	8-9	3-5	0-0

STARTERS—OFFENSE

No	Player	Pos
83	Wes Welker	WR
72	Matt Light	LT
70	Logan Mankins	LG
67	Dan Koppen	C
61	Stephen Neal	RG
77	Nick Kaczur	RT
84	Benjamin Watson	TE
81	Randy Moss	WR
12	Tom Brady	QB
39	Laurence Maroney	RB
44	Heath Evans	FB

STARTERS—DEFENSE

No	Player	Pos
94	Ty Warren	LE
75	Vince Wilfork	NT
93	Richard Seymour	RE
50	Mike Vrabel	OLB
55	Junior Seau	ILB
54	Tedy Bruschi	ILB
96	Adalius Thomas	OLB
22	Asante Samuel	LCB
27	Ellis Hobbs	RCB
37	Rodney Harrison	SS
36	James Sanders	FS

PATRIOTS NUMERICAL ROSTER

No	Player	Pos	No	Player	Pos
3	Stephen Gostkowski	K	54	Tedy Bruschi	LB
6	Chris Hanson	P	55	Junior Seau	LB
7	Matt Gutierrez	QB	58	Pierre Woods	LB
10	Jabar Gaffney	WR	61	Stephen Neal	G
12	Tom Brady	QB	65	Wesley Britt	T
15	Kelley Washington	WR	66	Lonie Paxton	LS
16	Matt Cassel	QB	67	Dan Koppen	C
17	Chad Jackson	WR	68	Ryan O'Callaghan	T
18	Donté Stallworth	WR	70	Logan Mankins	G
21	Randall Gay	CB	71	Russ Hochstein	G/C
22	Asante Samuel	CB	72	Matt Light	T
23	Willie Andrews	DB	74	Billy Yates	G
26	Eugene Wilson	DB	75	Vince Wilfork	DL
27	Ellis Hobbs	CB	77	Nick Kaczur	T
28	Antwain Spann	CB	80	Troy Brown	WR
31	Brandon Meriweather	DB	81	Randy Moss	WR
33	Kevin Faulk	RB	82	Stephen Spach	TE
36	James Sanders	S	83	Wes Welker	WR
37	Rodney Harrison	S	84	Benjamin Watson	TE
38	Kyle Eckel	FB	88	Kyle Brady	TE
39	Laurence Maroney	RB	90	Le Kevin Smith	DL
41	Ray Ventrone	DB	93	Richard Seymour	DL
44	Heath Evans	RB	94	Ty Warren	DL
50	Mike Vrabel	LB	95	Rashad Moore	DL
52	Eric Alexander	LB	96	Adalius Thomas	LB
53	Larry Izzo	LB	97	Jarvis Green	DL

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N.Y. GIANTS

GIANTS STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Eli Manning	297-529	56.1	3336	23	20	73.9

RUSHING	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Brandon Jacobs	202	1009	5.0	43	4
Derrick Ward	125	602	4.8	44	3
Reuben Droughns	85	275	3.2	45	6
Ahmad Bradshaw	23	190	8.3	88	1
Eli Manning	29	69	2.4	18	1

RECEIVING	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Plaxico Burress	70	1025	14.6	60	12
Amani Toomer	59	760	12.9	40	3
Jeremy Shockey	57	619	10.9	29	3
Derrick Ward	26	179	6.9	17	1
Brandon Jacobs	23	174	7.6	34	2
Sinorice Moss	21	225	10.7	20	0
Kevin Boss	9	118	13.1	23	2

TACKLES	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR
Antonio Pierce	76	26	102	1.0	1
Gibril Wilson	70	14	84	0.0	1
Kawika Mitchell	54	22	76	3.5	1
Sam Madison	59	8	67	1.0	1
Justin Tuck	46	17	63	10.0	0
James Butler	42	16	58	0.0	1
Michael Strahan	46	11	57	9.0	1
Osi Umenyiora	40	12	52	13.0	2
Mathias Kiwanuka	33	11	44	4.5	0
Fred Robbins	32	10	42	5.5	0
Aaron Ross	35	7	42	1.5	0
Kevin Dockery	29	11	40	0.0	1
Barry Cofield	29	5	34	1.0	0
Reggie Torbor	21	10	31	1.0	0

INTERCEPTIONS	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Sam Madison	4	59	14.8	27	0
Gibril Wilson	4	12	3.0	10	0
Aaron Ross	3	51	17.0	43	1

KICK RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Ahmad Bradshaw	38	921	24.2	68	0
Reuben Droughns	20	437	21.9	34	0

PUNT RETURNS	Ret	FC	Avg	Long	TD
R.W. McQuarters	42	18	7.6	27	0

PUNTING	No	Avg	Tchbk	In/20	Long
Jeff Feagles	71	40.4	5	25	60

FIELD GOALS	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Lawrence Tynes	23-27	1-1	9-10	5-8	8-8	0-0

STARTERS—OFFENSE

No	Player	Pos
17	Plaxico Burress	WR
66	David Diehl	LT
69	Rich Seubert	LG
60	Shaun O'Hara	C
76	Chris Snee	RG
67	Kareem McKenzie	RT
89	Kevin Boss	TE
81	Amani Toomer	WR
10	Eli Manning	QB
27	Brandon Jacobs	RB
39	Madison Hedgecock	FB

STARTERS—DEFENSE

No	Player	Pos
92	Michael Strahan	LE
96	Barry Cofield	NT
98	Fred Robbins	RT
72	Osi Umenyiora	RE
53	Reggie Torbor	OLB
58	Antonio Pierce	MLB
55	Kawika Mitchell	OLB
31	Aaron Ross	LCB
29	Sam Madison	RCB
37	James Butler	SS
28	Gibril Wilson	FS

GIANTS NUMERICAL ROSTER

No	Player	Pos	No	Player	Pos
2	Anthony Wright	QB	59	Gerris Wilkinson	LB
9	Lawrence Tynes	PK	60	Shaun O'Hara	C
10	Eli Manning	QB	61	Adam Koets	T
12	Steve Smith	WR	65	Grey Ruegamer	G
13	Jared Lorenzen	QB	66	David Diehl	T
17	Plaxico Burress	WR	67	Kareem McKenzie	T
18	Jeff Feagles	P	69	Rich Seubert	G
22	Reuben Droughns	RB	71	Dave Tollefson	DE
23	Corey Webster	CB	72	Osi Umenyiora	DE
25	R.W. McQuarters	CB	75	Manny Wright	DT
26	Danny Ware	RB	76	Chris Snee	G
27	Brandon Jacobs	RB	77	Kevin Boothe	G
28	Gibril Wilson	S	79	Guy Whimper	T
29	Sam Madison	CB	81	Amani Toomer	WR
31	Aaron Ross	CB	83	Sinorice Moss	WR
33	Geoffrey Pope	DB	85	David Tyree	WR
35	Kevin Dockery	CB	86	Jerome Collins	TE
37	James Butler	S	87	Domenik Hixon	WR
39	Madison Hedgecock	FB	88	Michael Matthews	TE
43	Michael Johnson	S	89	Kevin Boss	TE
44	Ahmad Bradshaw	RB	91	Justin Tuck	DE
51	Zak DeOssie	LB	92	Michael Strahan	DE
52	Tank Daniels	LB	93	Jay Alford	DT
53	Reggie Torbor	LB	96	Barry Cofield	DT
55	Kawika Mitchell	LB	98	Fred Robbins	DT
57	Chase Blackburn	LB	99	Russell Davis	DT
58	Antonio Pierce	LB			

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS
AFC CHAMPION

WITH EACH VICTORY, THE PRESSURE BUILDS. GOING 16-0 IN THE REGULAR SEASON WAS A TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT. IT MADE HISTORY. IT CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF THE SPORTING WORLD. BUT WHAT WILL IT MEAN IF THE PATRIOTS DON'T FINISH THE JOB AND WIN SUPER BOWL XLII? THEN AGAIN, WHEN HAS PRESSURE EVER AFFECTED THIS TEAM?

Jim Rogash/Getty Images

"For us, 14-0 was great, but our goal was to win the Super Bowl," says Don Shula, the head coach of the 1972 Miami Dolphins, the only NFL team so far to manage a perfect season. "We had been in [the Super Bowl] the year before and lost, and our entire goal was to get back and win it, and 14-0 just happened. I'm sure that's what happened to New England this year."

That may be the case, but it doesn't prevent the stakes from being higher than they ever were for any of the Patriots' first three Super Bowl championships.

With a loss in Super Bowl XLII, "perfection," which became the theme early this season (at least to the media and fans), would quickly give way to "almost." Never mind the 31-20 victory over Jacksonville in the divisional round or the 21-12 win over San Diego in the AFC title game.

Those NFL records for points in a season (589) and touchdowns (75)? They would be drowned out as well. For the Patriots, it is win a fourth Super Bowl crown or have one of the greatest seasons in NFL history be remembered more for what it wasn't than what it was.

Here's what it has been so far: An incredible breakout year for Tom Brady. In his eighth NFL season, he put a resounding end to any discussion that he couldn't put up gaudy statistics the way two-time league MVP Peyton Manning could for Indianapolis.

In fact, on the way to winning his first NFL MVP award, Brady broke Manning's single-season record by throwing 50 TD passes. He also led the league in passing yards (4,806, the third-highest total in NFL history), completion percentage (68.9), and passer rating (117.2). Even more impressive than the numbers is that on those rare occasions when the Patriots found themselves trailing, Brady showed his trademark cool while rallying his team each time.

He did it with the greatest supporting cast of his career—the offseason additions of Randy Moss, Wes Welker, and Donté Stallworth significantly upgraded the receiving corps.

"[Brady] is going to be remembered as one of the best who ever played in this league," defensive end Ty Warren says. "And he has definitely put on a clinic this year with the guys that he has had around him."

The mastermind behind it all is head coach Bill Belichick, who has not allowed his team to get caught up in the hype or the press clippings during this march toward history.

OFFENSE

Anyone who has seen the Patriots in recent years knows their success comes from Brady's ability to read defenses, spread the ball around,

PATRIOTS 2007 RESULTS (18-0)

Opponent	Score	W/L
@ N.Y. Jets	38-14	W
San Diego	38-14	W
Buffalo	38-7	W
@ Cincinnati	34-13	W
Cleveland	34-17	W
@ Dallas	48-27	W
@ Miami	49-28	W
Washington	52-7	W
@ Indianapolis	24-20	W
@ Buffalo	56-10	W
Philadelphia	31-28	W
@ Baltimore	27-24	W
Pittsburgh	34-13	W
N.Y. Jets	20-10	W
Miami	28-7	W
@ N.Y. Giants	38-35	W
AFC Playoffs		
Jacksonville	31-20	W
San Diego	21-12	W

AFC Championship Game: @ New England 21, San Diego 12

The undefeated Patriots found another way to win, playing solid defense while getting enough out of their offense to trip up the Chargers and reach the Super Bowl for the fourth time in seven years and sixth time in franchise history. New England kept San Diego out of the end zone despite three red-zone drives, and Ellis Hobbs and Asante Samuel stepped up with second-quarter pick-offs. Patriots QB Tom Brady overcame three interceptions of his own to go 22-of-33 for 209 yards with Kevin Faulk (8 receptions, 82 yards) his favorite target. Nate Kaeding put the Chargers on the board early with a 26-yard field goal, but Laurence Maroney (25 carries, 122 yards) scored on a 1-yard run and Brady threw a 12-yard touchdown to Jabar Gaffney as the Patriots moved in front, 14-9, at halftime. After Kaeding's fourth field goal of the game, Brady directed an 8-play, 67-yard drive capped by a short scoring pass to Wes Welker early in the fourth quarter. The Patriots then forced a San Diego punt with 9:13 to play and never gave the ball back, running out the clock with a 15-play drive.

Joel Auerbach/US Presswire

Two-time Super Bowl MVP Tom Brady (left) **had every reason to smile in 2007. He set the league record for touchdown passes with 50, against only eight interceptions. His prime target was Randy Moss** (above), **who broke Jerry Rice's NFL single-season mark by recording 23 TD receptions as part of a stunning 98-catch campaign.**

and deliver passes quickly and accurately to the open man. And someone is always open.

Opponents have tried to take away his favorite outside target, Moss (as the Jaguars and Chargers did in the playoffs). But that's allowed Welker to dominate inside against single coverage. And when Welker isn't open, then Brady looks for Stallworth…or Jabar Gaffney…or tight end Benjamin Watson…or pass-catching running back Kevin Faulk. You get the idea.

Most everything the Patriots do on offense begins with Brady using play-fakes and attacking with short and intermediate passes. The quicker he gets the ball out—especially on sideline routes—the better his chances of keeping the chains moving and getting into a rhythm. Brady is one of the best in the league at reading the blitz and quickly checking to hot reads. Welker is his favorite quick target on slants and pivot routes, but Brady also likes to throw screen and swing passes to Faulk out of the backfield. He did both effectively against San Diego in the AFC title game, hitting that duo with 15 of his 22 completions.

The Patriots will spread the field with four- and five-receiver sets and let Brady locate mismatches. But he constantly looks for Moss to use his considerable speed, height, and athleticism to break free on deep routes and isn't afraid to challenge any coverage to get the ball into the hands of the league's foremost game-breaking threat. That goes a long way to explaining why Moss caught 23 touchdowns this season, topping Jerry Rice's NFL record.

Welker, meanwhile, hauled in 112 passes, tying the Bengals' T.J. Houshmandzadeh for most in the NFL.

For the most part, the Patriots only run the ball when an opponent goes overboard to stop the pass. In fact, they will often run out of pass formations. However, their rushing attack, which ranked 13th in the NFL, is the most under-appreciated aspect of the offense.

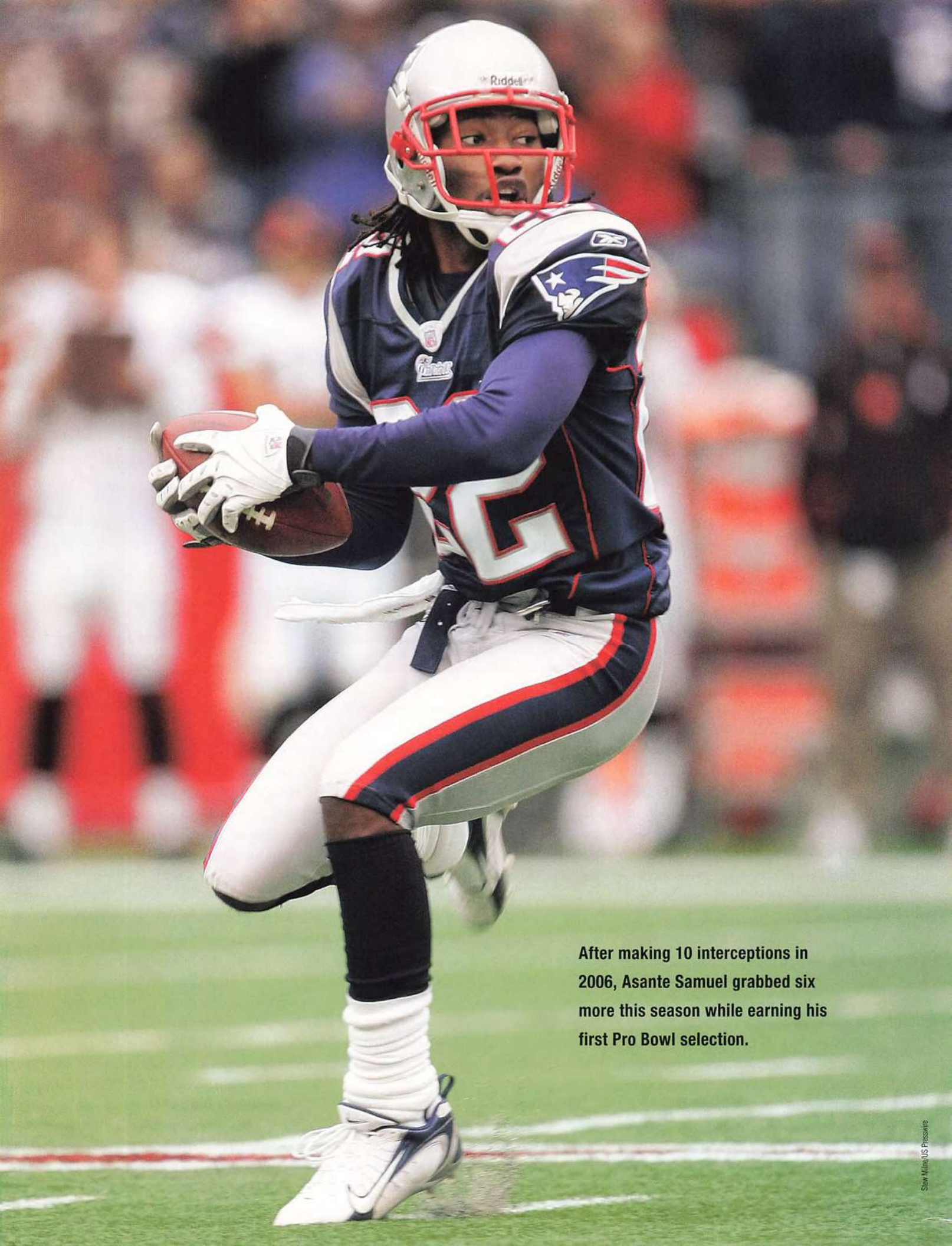
Laurence Maroney has come up big in the playoffs, gaining 122 yards in each of the team's wins. That followed a strong finish to the regular season when he rushed for 306 yards and four touchdowns in the final three games.

Maroney has a lot of his success running up the middle, behind center Dan Koppen and guards Logan Mankins and Stephen Neal. The offensive line's best player is left tackle Matt Light, who has outstanding quickness, uses his hands well to get separation, and maintains good balance. He does some of his best work on screens, pulls, and traps.

DEFENSE

When facing Belichick, the game's foremost defensive mastermind, a quarterback can expect to see a wide variety of fronts and blitzes along with a mixture of coverages. He can count on pass-rushing configurations that he has never seen before and coverages that will cause him to hold the ball and/or take a sack, make a poor pass under duress, or be baited into a bad decision.

At times, New England has shown vulnerability against power-oriented rushing attacks. Baltimore's Willis McGahee and Pittsburgh's Willie Parker worked them over in consecutive weeks late in the year. However, the Patriots did



After making 10 interceptions in 2006, Asante Samuel grabbed six more this season while earning his first Pro Bowl selection.

Steve Mitchell/US Presswire

Steve Mitchell/US Presswire

Richard Seymour's return from injury midway through the season served to strengthen the Patriots' already formidable defensive front. He finished with 30 tackles and six QB hits.

shut down the Jaguars' talented backfield duo of Fred Taylor and Maurice Jones-Drew in the playoffs.

The team's run-stopping ability begins with nose tackle Vince Wilfork using his considerable lower-body strength and leverage to clog the middle and force runners to bounce outside to Mike Vrabel and Adalius Thomas. Wilfork (70 tackles) is exceptionally quick and explosive for an athlete with his thick frame, and shows an excellent knack for finding the ball and making plays.

Thomas, who moved from inside to outside linebacker because of a season-ending injury to Rosevelt Colvin, has shown value with his versatility, and his ability to line up anywhere on the field makes him a perfect fit for a scheme that specializes in keeping opponents guessing. The 32-year-old Vrabel enjoyed his finest year in the league, picking up his first Pro Bowl selection after making a team-leading 12.5 sacks.

New England's inside linebackers, Junior Seau and Tedy Bruschi, count on Wilfork to keep them free of blockers. Otherwise, they can wear down if they need to consistently take on a fullback or offensive linemen or meet a running back directly in the hole. Seau, 39, stepped into the starting lineup after Colvin's injury and still plays with a high level of passion and aggressiveness. The Patriots also like to enhance their run defense by moving hard-hitting safety Rodney Harrison into the box by himself or with fellow safety James Sanders.

Five-time Pro Bowl end Richard Seymour began the season on the physically unable to perform list after undergoing offseason knee surgery. He sat out the first seven weeks while going through a grueling process to regain his strength and work himself back into football shape. When healthy, Seymour has the ability to dominate both inside and outside as a pass rusher and a run stopper. He can bull rush but also has the speed to beat most offensive tackles from the outside. He has good change of direction and can make plays on stunts. Seymour, fellow end Ty Warren, and Wilfork form one of the finest defensive lines in the league, evidenced by the Patriots' AFC-leading 47 sacks.

Cornerbacks Asante Samuel and Ellis Hobbs can play press coverage, working to knock receivers off of their routes and limiting how many yards they gain after the catch. Samuel, who followed up his 10 interceptions in 2006 with six more this season, is not a traditional shutdown corner; he generally does his best work in zone coverage. Hobbs takes advantage of the pressure put on by the defensive front to be quite aggressive in coverage.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Stephen Gostkowski has been mostly solid and ranked second in the NFL in scoring with 137 points, 74 of those coming on PATs. He made 24 of his 27 field goal attempts during the regular season.

When you have one of the greatest offenses the NFL has ever seen, you don't do much punting. As a result, Chris Hanson hasn't had many opportunities to hone his skills. He had the fewest attempts in the league with 44, and averaged 41.4 yards per kick.

Kickoffs are primarily handled by Hobbs (26.0-yard average), who had a 108-yard return for a touchdown against the Jets, while Welker averaged a solid 10.0 yards on his 25 punt returns.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Patriots are masters of the postseason, and there is no reason to think they will crack under the pressure of trying to go 19-0. Don't fool yourself, it will take a nearly perfect effort to beat this perfect team.

On both sides of the ball, New England is patient and methodical, waiting to pounce on an opponent's mistake. Take this into account: they committed a league-low 15 turnovers during the regular season. This unflappable nature allowed them to survive close calls against the Colts, Eagles, Ravens, and Giants in the regular season.

And unlike their previous Super Bowl teams, this Patriots squad is loaded with dynamic playmakers. Brady has always been capable of making plays regardless of his surrounding talent, but now is showing elite skills that place him among the greatest passers in NFL history.

New England will look to set the tone early with an aggressive passing attack, the idea being it will eventually create room for Maroney and the ground game. As long as the defense isn't overpowered by the Giants' run, it should be able to feed off the offense's quick-strike ability and take advantage of mistakes resulting from New York's urgency to score.

–Vic Carucci, NFL.com National Editor

ROBERT KRAFT Chairman & CEO

Courtesy of New England Patriots

Robert Kraft announced his intentions to bring New England a championship the day he bought the Patriots on Jan. 21, 1994, and in the 14 years since has made good on that pledge many times over. Under Kraft's leadership, the Patriots have won eight division titles, five conference championships, and three Super Bowls, and in 2007 completed the first 16-0 regular season in NFL history.

Since Kraft purchased the Patriots, no NFL team has won as many games (162), playoff games (17), or Super Bowls (three), and New England's five trips to the Super Bowl in that time are also more than any other team. Since 2001, the Patriots have won three NFL championships, making them one of this millennium's most successful major sports franchises.

NEW ENGLAND HAS REACHED THE SUPER BOWL FIVE TIMES IN ROBERT KRAFT'S 14 SEASONS OF OWNERSHIP.

Kraft's transformation of the Patriots constitutes one of the greatest long-term, worst-to-first stories in sports history. In the four seasons immediately preceding his purchase (1990-93), the Patriots compiled an NFL-worst 14-50 (.219) record. By contrast, the team qualified for the playoffs in four of Kraft's first five seasons as owner. His inaugural season ended with the team's first playoff berth in eight years; two years later, the Patriots won their second conference title in franchise history and represented the AFC in Super Bowl XXXI against the Packers.

New England has qualified for the playoffs in 10 of Kraft's 14 seasons of ownership, appearing in 23 playoff games—the highest total in the league over that span. From 2001-07, New England has recorded an NFL-best 100-28 (.781) record—including a 14-2 playoff mark.

Kraft is one of the NFL's most influential and respected owners. In 1998, after just four seasons in the NFL, he was appointed chairman of the league's finance committee. As a member of the television and broadcast committee, he played a leading role in negotiating the most lucrative broadcast contract in the history of sports and was one of the principals who negotiated the extension of those broadcasting rights.

Kraft is chairman of the NFL's Broadcast Committee and serves on several other of the league's most prominent committees. They include the finance, NFL Network operations, investment, and competition committees, as well as the management executive council.

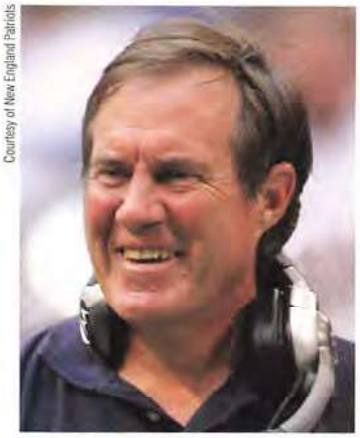
Under Kraft's leadership, the Patriots also are among the NFL's elite in revenue, and finished the 2007 season with a 14-year consecutive home sellout streak, which now stands at 149 games. On the *SportsBusiness Journal's* list of the "50 Most Influential People in Sports Business," Kraft has been the highest ranking professional sports team owner for the last three years. In 2002, he was recognized as the Sports Executive of the Year and Sports Industrialist of the Year by two national publications. In September 2005, Kraft appeared on the cover of *Forbes* alongside the Patriots' three Super Bowl trophies and the headline "The Best Team in Sports." The magazine valued the Patriots franchise at more than one billion dollars, just the fourth sports franchise to eclipse that plateau.

Kraft founded The Kraft Group to serve as the holding company for the family's varied business interests, which are concentrated in five areas: paper and packaging manufacturing and the distribution of forest products; sports and entertainment; real estate development; private equity investing; and philanthropy. The Kraft Group's holdings include: Rand-Whitney and International Forest Products, one of the largest privately owned and fully integrated paper and packaging companies in the United States; the Patriots, New England Revolution, and Gillette Stadium; and Patriot Place, a 1.3-million square foot super regional lifestyle and entertainment destination in Foxborough, Mass.

PATRIOTS TEAM OFFICIALS

Robert K. Kraft	Chairman & CEO
Jonathan A. Kraft	President
Scott Pioli	Vice President of Player Personnel
Jim Hausmann	Chief Administrative Officer
Brian Bilello	Director of Strategic Initiatives and Retail Operations
Robin Boudreau	Vice President of Human Resources
Mark Briggs	Chief Operating Officer of Team Ops Security
Don Brocher	Equipment Manager
Pat Curley	Vice President of Information Technology
Jimmy Dee	Video Director
Jennifer Ferron	Vice President of Marketing Operations
Jessica Gelman	Director of New Business Development & Operational Initiatives
Maryruth Hughey	Director of Ticket Operations
Stacey James	Vice President of Media Relations
Richard Karelitz	General Counsel
Fred Kirsch	Publisher / Editor-in-Chief and Director of Interactive Media
Murray Kohl	Vice President of Sales
Josh Kraft	President of New England Patriots Charitable Foundation
John Mitchell	Chief Financial Officer
Dan Murphy	Vice President of Stadium Business Development & External Affairs
Berj Najarian	Director of Football / Head Coach Administration
Jim Nolan	Vice President of Stadium Operations
David Pearlstein	Executive Director of Corporate Development
Matt Smith	Executive Producer of Broadcast Production
Tracy Sormanti	Director of Cheerleaders
Andre Tippett	Executive Director of Community Affairs
Jim Whalen	Head Athletic Trainer

BILL BELICHICK Head Coach



Courtesy of New England Patriots

Bill Belichick, who is completing his 33rd season as an NFL coach, is the only head coach in league history to win three Super Bowl titles in a four-year span.

Belichick, hired by Robert Kraft as the 14th head coach in Patriots history on Jan. 27, 2000, has led the Patriots to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in the past seven seasons. His .833 postseason winning percentage is second only to the legendary Vince Lombardi, and his 15 career playoff wins rank fifth all-time.

In 2007, Belichick led the Patriots to the fourth undefeated and untied regular season in NFL history and the first since the establishment of the 16-game schedule. He has directed the Patriots to six division championships in the last seven seasons. During this span, the Patriots have set all-time NFL records for consecutive total victories (21), consecutive regular-season victories (19), and consecutive playoff victories (10). In 2003 and 2004, he guided the Patriots to back-to-back Super Bowl titles while posting consecutive 17-win campaigns.

Belichick is one of nine coaches in NFL history to capture three or more NFL championships—along with Paul Brown, Weeb Ewbank, Joe Gibbs, George Halas, Curly Lambeau, Vince Lombardi, Chuck Noll, and Bill Walsh. Since entering the NFL in 1975, Belichick has contributed to 13 division championships, seven conference crowns, and five Super Bowl titles.

He launched his career as a special assistant with the Baltimore Colts, before coaching with Detroit (1976-77) and Denver (1978). In 1979, he joined the New York Giants staff and contributed to Super Bowl titles in 1986 and 1990 as the team's defensive coordinator.

When Belichick was named head coach of the Cleveland Browns in 1991, he became the youngest head coach in the NFL at age 37.

PATRIOTS HEAD COACH: BILL BELICHICK

ASSISTANTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Nick Caserio	Wide Receivers
Joel Collier	Secondary
Don Davis	Assistant Strength & Conditioning
Ivan Fears	Running Backs
Pepper Johnson	Defensive Line
Pete Mangurian	Tight Ends
Josh McDaniels	Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
Harold Nash	Assistant Strength & Conditioning
Matt Patricia	Linebackers
Dean Pees	Defensive Coordinator
Dante Scarnecchia	Assistant Head Coach/Offensive Line
Brad Seely	Special Teams
Mike Woicik	Strength & Conditioning
Kevin Bickers	Coaching Assistant
Josh Boyer	Coaching Assistant
Bill O'Brien	Coaching Assistant

PATRIOTS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	BIRTH DATE	NFL EXP	COLLEGE
52	Alexander, Eric	LB	6-2	240	2/8/82	3	Louisiana State
23	Andrews, Willie	DB	5-10	190	11/2/83	2	Baylor
88	Brady, Kyle	TE	6-6	280	1/14/72	13	Penn State
12	Brady, Tom	QB	6-4	225	8/3/77	8	Michigan
65	Britt, Wesley	T	6-8	320	11/21/81	2	Alabama
80	Brown, Troy	WR	5-10	196	7/2/71	15	Marshall
54	Bruschi, Tedy	LB	6-1	247	6/9/73	12	Arizona
16	Cassel, Matt	QB	6-4	230	5/17/82	3	USC
38	Eckel, Kyle	FB	5-11	237	12/30/81	1	Navy
44	Evans, Heath	RB	6-0	250	12/30/78	7	Auburn
33	Faulk, Kevin	RB	5-8	202	6/5/76	9	Louisiana State
10	Gaffney, Jabar	WR	6-1	200	12/1/80	6	Florida
21	Gay, Randall	CB	5-11	190	5/5/82	4	Louisiana State
3	Gostkowski, Stephen	K	6-1	210	1/28/84	2	Memphis
97	Green, Jarvis	DL	6-3	285	1/12/79	6	Louisiana State
7	Gutierrez, Matt	QB	6-4	230	6/9/84	R	Idaho State
6	Hanson, Chris	P	6-2	202	10/25/76	9	Marshall
37	Harrison, Rodney	S	6-1	220	12/15/72	14	Western Illinois
27	Hobbs, Ellis	CB	5-9	195	5/16/83	3	Iowa State
71	Hochstein, Russ	G/C	6-4	305	10/7/77	6	Nebraska
53	Izzo, Larry	LB	5-10	228	9/26/74	12	Rice
17	Jackson, Chad	WR	6-1	215	3/6/85	2	Florida
77	Kaczur, Nick	T	6-4	315	7/28/79	3	Toledo
67	Koppen, Dan	C	6-2	296	9/12/79	5	Boston College
72	Light, Matt	T	6-4	305	6/23/78	7	Purdue
70	Mankins, Logan	G	6-4	310	3/10/82	3	Fresno State
39	Maroney, Laurence	RB	5-11	220	2/5/85	2	Minnesota
31	Meriweather, Brandon	DB	5-11	200	1/14/84	R	Miami (FL)
95	Moore, Rashad	DL	6-3	325	3/16/79	4	Tennessee
81	Moss, Randy	WR	6-4	210	2/13/77	10	Marshall
61	Neal, Stephen	G	6-4	305	10/9/76	6	Cal State-Bakersfield
68	O'Callaghan, Ryan	T	6-7	330	7/19/83	2	California
66	Paxton, Lonie	LS	6-2	260	3/13/78	8	Sacramento State
22	Samuel, Asante	CB	5-10	185	1/6/81	5	Central Florida
36	Sanders, James	S	5-10	210	11/11/83	3	Fresno State
55	Seau, Junior	LB	6-3	250	1/19/69	18	USC
93	Seymour, Richard	DL	6-6	310	10/6/79	7	Georgia
90	Smith, Le Kevin	DL	6-1	308	7/21/82	2	Nebraska
82	Spach, Stephen	TE	6-4	250	7/18/82	2	Fresno State
28	Spann, Antwain	CB	6-0	195	2/22/83	2	Louisiana-Lafayette
18	Stallworth, Donté	WR	6-0	200	11/10/80	6	Tennessee
96	Thomas, Adalius	LB	6-2	270	8/18/77	8	Southern Mississippi
41	Ventrone, Ray	DB	5-10	200	10/21/82	2	Villanova
50	Vrabel, Mike	LB	6-4	261	8/14/75	11	Ohio State
94	Warren, Ty	DL	6-5	300	2/6/81	5	Texas A&M
15	Washington, Kelley	WR	6-3	215	8/21/79	5	Tennessee
84	Watson, Benjamin	TE	6-3	255	12/18/80	4	Georgia
83	Welker, Wes	WR	5-9	185	5/1/81	4	Texas Tech
75	Wilfork, Vince	DL	6-2	325	11/4/81	4	Miami (FL)
26	Wilson, Eugene	DB	5-10	195	8/17/80	5	Illinois
58	Woods, Pierre	LB	6-5	250	1/6/82	2	Michigan
74	Yates, Billy	G	6-2	305	4/15/80	4	Texas A&M

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Eric Alexander (52)
Linebacker

Willie Andrews (23)
Defensive Back

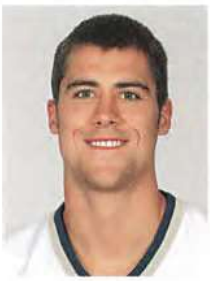
Kyle Brady (88)
Tight End

Tom Brady (12)
Quarterback

Wesley Britt (65)
Tackle

Troy Brown (80)
Wide Receiver

Tedy Bruschi (54)
Linebacker



Matt Cassel (16)
Quarterback

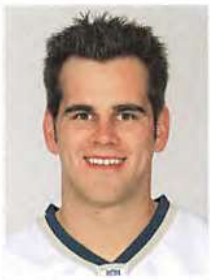
Kyle Eckel (38)
Fullback

Heath Evans (44)
Running Back

Kevin Faulk (33)
Running Back

Jabar Gaffney (10)
Wide Receiver

Randall Gay (21)
Cornerback



Stephen Gostkowski (3)
Kicker

Jarvis Green (97)
Defensive Line

Matt Gutierrez (7)
Quarterback

Chris Hanson (6)
Punter

Rodney Harrison (37)
Safety

Ellis Hobbs (27)
Cornerback

Russ Hochstein (71)
Guard/Center

Larry Izzo (53)
Linebacker

Chad Jackson (17)
Wide Receiver

Nick Kaczur (77)
Tackle

Dan Koppen (67)
Center

Matt Light (72)
Tackle

Logan Mankins (70)
Guard

AFC CHAMPION

Laurence Maroney (39)
Running Back

Brandon Meriweather (31)
Defensive Back

Rashad Moore (95)
Defensive Line

Randy Moss (81)
Wide Receiver

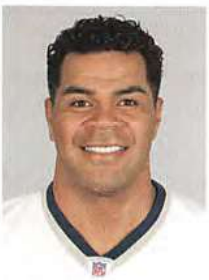
Stephen Neal (61)
Guard

Ryan O'Callaghan (68)
Tackle

Lonie Paxton (66)
Long Snapper

Asante Samuel (22)
Cornerback

James Sanders (36)
Safety



Junior Seau (55)
Linebacker

Richard Seymour (93)
Defensive Line

Le Kevin Smith (90)
Defensive Line

Stephen Spach (82)
Tight End

Antwain Spann (28)
Cornerback

Donté Stallworth (18)
Wide Receiver

Adalius Thomas (96)
Linebacker

Ray Ventrone (41)
Defensive Back

Mike Vrabel (50)
Linebacker

Ty Warren (94)
Defensive Line

Kelley Washington (15)
Wide Receiver

Benjamin Watson (84)
Tight End

Wes Welker (83)
Wide Receiver

Vince Wilfork (75)
Defensive Line

Eugene Wilson (26)
Defensive Back

Pierre Woods (58)
Linebacker

Billy Yates (74)
Guard

NEW YORK GIANTS
NFC CHAMPION

FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR, A MANNING WILL PLAY QUARTERBACK IN THE SUPER BOWL. ANYONE WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE GUESSED BEFORE THE 2007 SEASON THAT HIS FIRST NAME WOULD BE ELI AND NOT PEYTON, PLEASE STAND. WHAT'S THAT? STILL SITTING? DON'T FEEL BAD. JUST LOOK AROUND. YOU HAVE PLENTY OF COMPANY.

Fernando Medina/US Presswire

But Eli's arrival was supposed to happen sooner or later, wasn't it? After all, like his older brother, Eli was a No. 1 overall draft pick. And like his older brother, he entered the league with sky-high expectations.

Yet, unlike Peyton, Eli has struggled on a fairly regular basis. He's had great moments, enough to take New York to the playoffs three straight years, but there also have been times when he's made mistakes in bunches—so many, in fact, that some questioned what the Giants were thinking when they traded for Manning hours after the San Diego Chargers chose him first in the 2004 NFL Draft.

Now we know.

Since Dec. 29, when he gave a virtual lights-out showing as the Giants nearly put an end to the Patriots' pursuit of a perfect regular season, Manning has been on a roll. Against the Pats, he threw for 251 yards and four touchdowns. He then was close to flawless in leading a 24-14 wild-card victory over Tampa Bay, a 21-17 divisional-round win over top-seeded Dallas, and a 23-20 overtime triumph over the Packers in the NFC Championship Game. Even in the brutal cold that engulfed Lambeau Field, he completed 21 of 40 passes for 254 yards and ran a ball-control attack that allowed New York to hold a nearly two-to-one advantage in time of possession.

"I'm just happy Eli is on our team," center Shaun O'Hara says. "He gets a lot of criticism because of his last name, but he's a great QB and is finally receiving the recognition he deserves."

GIANTS 2007 RESULTS (13-6)

Opponent	Score	W/L
@ Dallas	35-45	L
Green Bay	13-35	L
@ Washington	24-17	W
Philadelphia	16-3	W
N.Y. Jets	35-24	W
@ Atlanta	31-10	W
San Francisco	33-15	W
@ Miami (London)	13-10	W
Dallas	20-31	L
@ Detroit	16-10	W
Minnesota	17-41	L
@ Chicago	21-16	W
@ Philadelphia	16-13	W
Washington	10-22	L
@ Buffalo	38-21	W
New England	35-38	L
NFC Playoffs		
@ Tampa Bay	24-14	W
@ Dallas	21-17	W
@ Green Bay	(OT) 23-20	W

NFC Championship Game: N.Y. Giants 23, @ Green Bay 20 (OT)

The third time was the charm for Lawrence Tynes, who, after missing two potential game-winning field goals, hit a 47-yarder early in overtime that lifted the Giants to victory at frigid Lambeau Field. The win put New York in the Super Bowl for the first time since the 2000 season and fourth time in team history. With the temperature below zero at kickoff, this back-and-forth thriller saw Green Bay carry a 13-10 lead into the half, only to have the Giants take seven minutes off the clock to open the third quarter and move ahead on Brandon Jacobs' 1-yard plunge. The Packers regained the lead, but Ahmad Bradshaw answered with a 4-yard TD run for the visitors that made it 20-17. After Green Bay tied things up in the fourth quarter, Tynes missed kicks from 43 and 36 yards, creating just the second overtime contest in NFC Championship Game history. The Packers won the toss, but Corey Webster picked off Brett Favre and returned the ball to the Green Bay 34. Three plays later Tynes redeemed himself, giving the Giants their 10th straight—and biggest—road win of the season.

As a team, the Giants have gained acclaim as the consummate road warriors. The players have drawn strength from their ability to play their best football outside of East Rutherford, N.J. They have thrived on an "us-against-the-world" mentality that took hold after their season-opening loss at Texas Stadium. Since then, they have reeled off 10 consecutive road wins, including three in the playoffs.

"It seems like every time our backs are pushed further into that wall, we respond," veteran linebacker Antonio Pierce says. "On the road, it's just us."

OFFENSE

With time in the pocket and the room to set his feet, Manning is an extremely accurate passer. Throw in strong running from Brandon Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw, and you have a quarterback who can be as dangerous as any in the league...including his big brother.

However, when defenses attack him up the middle, Manning can get into trouble and start making the sort of bad decisions that

Evan Pinkus/Getty Images

Eli Manning (left) **has played the best football of his career during the Giants' improbable postseason run, leading New York to road victories against Tampa Bay, Dallas, and Green Bay to reach Super Bowl XLII. Defensive end Osi Umenyiora** (above) **made a team-leading 13 sacks this season, six of those coming in a win over Philadelphia.**

have caused him to draw plenty of criticism during his four NFL seasons.

Thanks to the power running of Jacobs, the exceptional speed of Bradshaw, and blocking by an underrated offensive line, the Giants' ground game has become a force through the latter part of the season and the playoffs.

At 6-foot-4 and 264 pounds, Jacobs is larger than most of the people trying to tackle him. His sheer size and power allow him to wear down defenses over the course of a game. Jacobs also has deceptive speed and good open-field running ability. In just 11 regular-season games, he rushed for 1,009 yards and averaged 5.0 yards per carry.

Bradshaw, a rookie out of Marshall, is a smaller and quicker change-of-tempo back. He shows outstanding burst into holes and is a far more powerful inside runner than his size (5-9, 198 pounds) would indicate. If Bradshaw reaches the second level at full speed, watch out because he can go the distance.

No. 1 receiver Plaxico Burress has been bothered all season by a sore ankle that has limited his practice time. Yet, on game day, Burress is ready to compete and has done a good job providing Manning with a playmaker. He was sensational in the NFC title-game win at Green Bay, hauling in 11 catches for 154 yards. When defenses try to force Burress to the middle of the field off his release, he will fight his way to the outside and then use his 6-5 frame to win most battles for the ball.

Burress is always Manning's first option in the red zone—take note of his 12 touchdown catches—even more so now with injured tight end Jeremy Shockey out of the lineup.

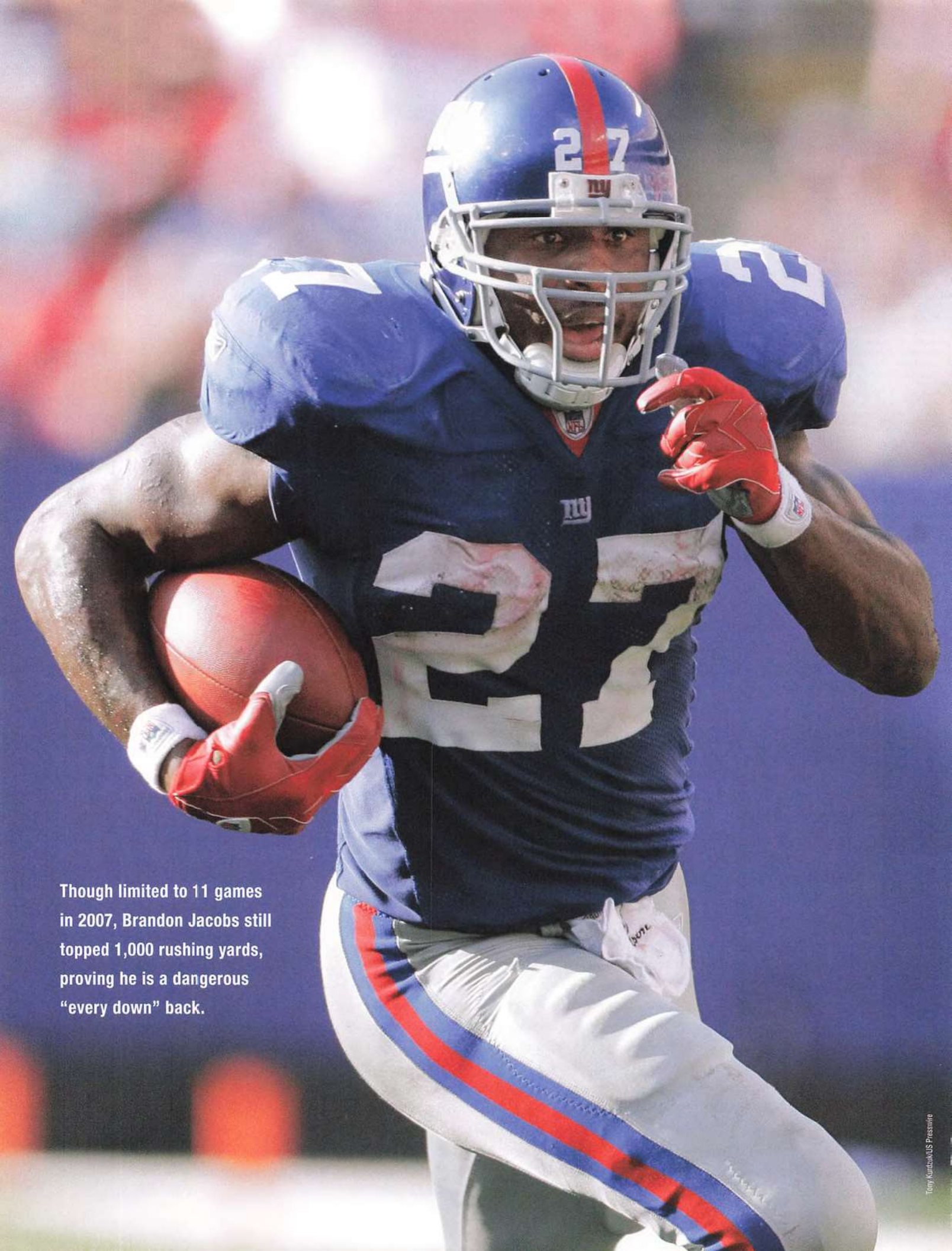
Veteran Amani Toomer has emerged as a game-breaking force and is a likely third-down target against man-to-man coverage. Steve Smith and Sinorice Moss, the youngsters of the receiving corps, have speed and can create mismatches while working from the slot.

Manning does especially well with the short passing game because it gives him quick, simple reads on high-percentage throws to his backs and to tight end Kevin Boss, whose solid performance in the season finale against the Patriots proved he deserves a role in the team's offense. At 6-6 and 257 pounds, Boss is a huge target. His hands are dependable and he usually runs the proper routes. Boss will work the middle of the field and is smart enough to know when to break off his route to run under a linebacker, or when to split the coverage and get behind a linebacker in the seam.

Left offensive tackle David Diehl is an explosive run blocker who does a good job of driving with his legs and finishing blocks. In pass protection, he shows initial quickness and has lateral movement that forces pass rushers to run wider than they would prefer. O'Hara is an excellent anchor for a group that does a steady job of keeping Manning upright (they yielded just 28 sacks) and opening holes.

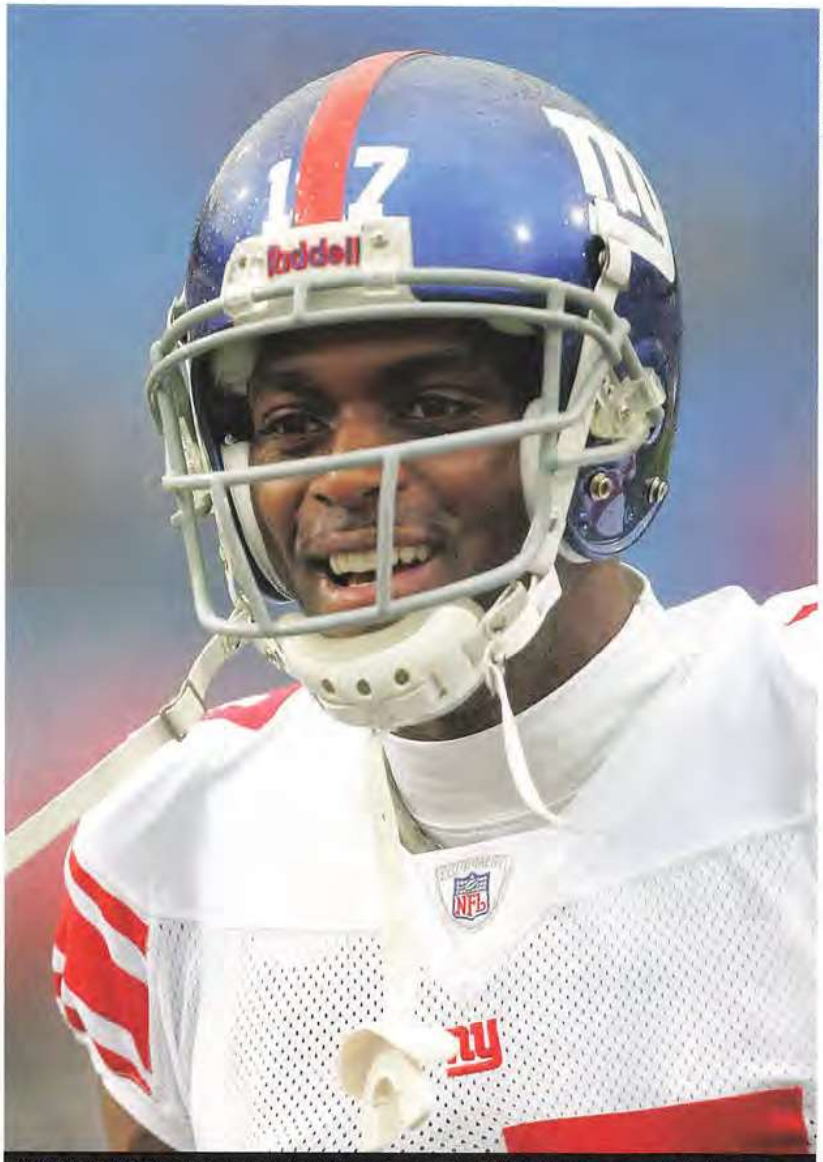
DEFENSE

The Giants' defensive specialty is bringing pressure, as evidenced by their league-leading 53 sacks. Besides the pass-rushing prowess of his front four, coordinator Steve Spagnuolo also loves to make use of fire-zone blitzes.



Though limited to 11 games in 2007, Brandon Jacobs still topped 1,000 rushing yards, proving he is a dangerous "every down" back.

Tony Kurdzuk/US Presswire



Paul Jasienski/Getty Images

With the aid of his 6-5 frame, Plaxico Burress has caught 29 touchdown passes in his three years with the Giants, including 12 during 2007. He also led this year's team with 70 receptions.

Most opponents struggle to keep ends Michael Strahan and Osi Umenyiora out of the backfield. That task becomes even more difficult when fellow end Justin Tuck lines up inside and a linebacker or safety comes off the edge.

Strahan is a 15-year veteran whose body has taken its share of pounding, yet he remains extremely quick and explosive off the line. Strahan has a great deal of strength and plays with superb leverage, with one key to his success as a pass-rusher being his wide variety of moves and counter moves. He also still ranks among the league's most complete ends, showing as much effectiveness as ever against the run.

Strahan feeds off the success of Umenyiora, who has explosive initial quickness and speed, and does some of his best work on slants and stunts. Umenyiora has good upper-body strength and is adept enough with his handwork to gain leverage and control over his blocker.

Spagnuolo uses his front seven to attack the line of scrimmage while having his secondary play three-deep coverage. The drawback with this approach is that linebackers are expected to drop into coverage when needed, occasionally leading to vacant areas in the middle of the field.

The Giants' aggressive linebackers also must resist the urge to overplay the run and leave the middle open for short passes. On the other hand, if the linebackers are too quick to get into their pass drops, they risk opening up running lanes.

Pierce likes to play downhill and attack the ball carrier. He can be neutralized only if opponents are able to drive tackles Fred Robbins and Barry Cofield off the line of scrimmage, as was the case when the Cowboys' Marion Barber ran for 129 yards in the divisional-round game.

Despite their outstanding pass rush, the Giants have had issues in their secondary. During the regular season, they allowed 11 pass plays of 40-plus yards, fourth most in the league, and 47 plays of 20-plus yards, which was eighth most. Safeties Gibril Wilson and James Butler will have to be at the top of their game to make an impact.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Lawrence Tynes has been fairly solid. He hit 23 of 27 field goal attempts during the regular season, but it will be key that he comes out of the Green Bay game with more confidence than doubts.

Veteran punter Jeff Feagles ranked next-to-last in the league with a 40.4-yard average, however he did drop 25 kicks inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Giants have become one of the best stories of the postseason by scoring three improbable road victories. But the spark that has lifted them actually began in Week 17—in front of a home crowd and an audience of 35 million watching three television networks.

Head coach Tom Coughlin earned the respect of football fans everywhere by playing his starters most of the way that night against New England. Although a win would not have enhanced the Giants' playoff status, Coughlin felt it important for his team to give its best effort and believed it would serve as good preparation for the postseason. The game did just that...and more.

They are a tough, scrappy team capable of bouncing back from early adversity (as they did vs. Tampa Bay), setting the tempo with a quick score (as was the case against Dallas), or winning late (as happened in Green Bay). In many ways, they are an embodiment of the character and leadership of their coach.

Possessing a running attack strong enough to impose its will on any opponent, the combination of Jacobs' inside power and Bradshaw's outside speed is a challenge for defenses. And when the running game is in high gear, it creates room for Manning to keep moving the chains.

Manning is now taking better care of the football than at any point of his career. This maturity means that instead of reeling from their own mistakes, it is the Giants who are able to take advantage of their opponents' blunders. That's how they beat the Packers.

You can count on this: The Giants won't be intimidated by the Patriots. They've already proven they can go head-to-head with the AFC champions, and they put more points on the scoreboard against them than anyone else this season. Expect them to come out aggressive, even if they know that one mistake may be too many.

–Vic Carucci, NFL.com National Editor

JOHN MARA
President, CEO

Courtesy of New York Giants

John K. Mara is in his 17th season with the Giants. As the franchise's chief executive officer, he assumed the team presidency upon the passing of his father, Wellington Mara. He had been the team's executive vice president and chief operating officer. In his present position, Mara is responsible for all administrative, legal, and financial aspects of the organization.

Mara also serves on the influential NFL Competition Committee, which studies all aspects of the game and recommends rules and policy changes to NFL clubs, as well as the league's management council executive committee, the revenue sharing qualifier committee, and the committee on workplace diversity.

Mara graduated from Boston College in 1976 and earned his law degree from Fordham University in 1979. After beginning his career as an attorney with the New York law firm of Vedder, Price, Kaufman, Kammholz and Day, Mara moved to the Manhattan firm of Shea & Gould, where he practiced until joining the Giants in 1991.

He serves on the Board of Directors of Saint Vincent's Hospital in Harrison, N.Y., The School of the Holy Child (also in Harrison), Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of Newark, and Boys Hope Girls Hope of New York.

Mara and his wife, the former Denise Walter, are the parents of five children: Lauren, Courtney, John Jr., Christine, and Erin. The family resides in Harrison, N.Y.

STEVE TISCH
Chairman, Executive VP

Courtesy of New York Giants

Steve Tisch formally joined the Giants organization as executive vice president in July 2005, but has been intimately involved with the team since his father, Preston Robert Tisch, purchased 50 percent of the franchise in 1991. Following his father's passing in 2005, Tisch assumed the additional title of chairman.

Tisch is among the most successful producers in the motion picture industry. One of his most noteworthy professional achievements was the production of *Forrest Gump*, for which he received a Best Motion Picture Academy Award and a Golden Globe.

Tisch began his career in entertainment while a student at Tufts University, and upon graduation worked at Columbia Pictures. In 1976, he left Columbia to produce the motion picture *Outlaw Blues*. Tisch met Jon Avnet during the shoot and the pair soon formed Tisch/Avnet Productions. In 1986, Tisch formed his own production company.

Tisch has long been a leader in philanthropic ventures, most notably in women's issues and the fight against cancer. He also has generously contributed his time and resources to The H.E.L.P. Group and the ERAS Center. He is on the Board of Advisors at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and on the Board of Trustees of the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Cancer Center at Duke.

Tisch and his wife, Jamie, have three young children. He has two older children from a previous marriage.

GIANTS TEAM OFFICIALS

John K. Mara	President and Chief Executive Officer
Steve Tisch	Chairman and Executive Vice President
Jonathan Tisch	Treasurer
Chris Mara	Vice President of Player Evaluation
Jim Phelan	Director of Administration
Allison Stangeby	Director of Community Relations
Ed Wagner Jr.	Equipment/Locker Room Manager
Joseph Skiba	Equipment Director
Ed Skiba	Assistant Equipment Manager
Tim Slaman	Assistant Equipment Manager
Terry Mansfield	Field Security Manager
Mike Murphy	Team Security
Julie Glisky	Director of Information Technology, Applications & Development
Justin Warren	Director of Information Technology, Network & Systems
Frank Mara	Director of Promotions
Ronnie Barnes	Vice President/Medical Services
Steve Kennelly	Assistant Head Athletic Trainer
Byron Hansen	Coordinator of Rehabilitation
Leigh Weiss	Assistant Athletic Trainer
John Johnson	Assistant Athletic Trainer
Charles Way	Director of Player Development
Jerry Reese	Senior Vice President and General Manager
Kevin Abrams	Assistant General Manager
Marc Ross	Director of College Scouting
Jerry Shay	Assistant Director of College Scouting
Joe Collins	Executive Scout
Jeremiah Davis	Executive Scout
Steve Verderosa	Executive Scout
Stephen Devine	Scout
Donnie Etheridge	Scout
Ryan Jones	Scout
Steve Malin	Scout
Chris Pettit	Scout
Ray Walsh Jr.	Director Research & Development
Christopher Watts	BLESTO Scout
Harry Hulmes	Scout Emeritus
Dave Gettleman	Director of Pro Personnel
Ken Sternfeld	Assistant Director of Pro Personnel
Matt Shauger	Pro Personnel Assistant
Jeremy Breit	Pro Personnel Assistant
Rita Giordanetti	Assistant to GM & Scouting
Matthew Harriss	Football Operations Coordinator
Andrea Wagner	Assistant to Pro Personnel
Dave Maltese	Video Director
Carmen Pizzano	Assistant Video Director
Ed Triggs	Assistant Video Director

TOM COUGHLIN Head Coach

Courtesy of New York Giants

Tom Coughlin was named the 16th head coach in N.Y. Giants history on Jan. 6, 2004. A highly respected leader who has succeeded as a head coach in the NFL and on the collegiate level, he was a Giants assistant when they won Super Bowl XXV.

Coughlin has won three division titles and led his teams to the playoffs seven times in his 12 years as an NFL head coach. He is 103-89 (.536) in the regular season and 110-95 (.537) in all games. His 103 regular-season victories place him seventh among current NFL head coaches.

Previously, Coughlin coached the Jacksonville Jaguars, guiding the team for its first eight NFL seasons. Under Coughlin, the Jaguars were the most successful expansion team in NFL history. He twice took them to the AFC Championship Game, and in 1996 he was named NFL Coach of the Year by United Press International.

Coughlin arrived in Jacksonville following three years as the head coach at Boston College. Previously, he was the Giants wide receivers coach under Bill Parcells from 1988-90 and also worked in the NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles and Green Bay Packers.

A 1968 graduate of Syracuse with a degree in education, Coughlin played in a backfield with All-America backs Larry Csonka and Floyd Little. As a senior, he set Syracuse's single-season pass receiving record. Coughlin was the head coach at Rochester Institute of Technology from 1970-73, then returned to his alma mater as an assistant in 1974.

Coughlin and his wife, Judy, have two daughters, Keli and Katie, and four grandchildren.

GIANTS HEAD COACH: TOM COUGHLIN

ASSISTANTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Jon Berger	Senior Director of Football Information
Bonnie Campbell	Assistant to Coaching Staff
Andre Curtis	Defensive Quality Control
Dave DeGuglielmo	Assistant Offensive Line
Pat Flaherty	Offensive Line
Kevin Gilbride	Offensive Coordinator
Peter Giunta	Secondary/Cornerbacks
Jerald Ingram	Running Backs
Kim Kolbe	Assistant to Head Coach
Thomas McGaughey	Assistant Special Teams
David Merritt	Secondary/Safeties
Chris Palmer	Quarterbacks
Jerry Palmieri	Strength and Conditioning
Markus Paul	Assistant Strength and Conditioning
Michael Pope	Tight Ends
Chris Pridy	Coaches' Assistant
Tom Quinn	Special Teams Coordinator
Sean Ryan	Offensive Quality Control
Bill Sheridan	Linebackers
Steve Spagnuolo	Defensive Coordinator
Mike Sullivan	Wide Receivers
Mike Waufle	Defensive Line

GIANTS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	BIRTH DATE	NFL EXP	COLLEGE
93	Alford, Jay	DT	6-3	304	5/28/83	R	Penn State
57	Blackburn, Chase	LB	6-3	247	6/10/83	3	Akron
77	Boothe, Kevin	G	6-5	315	7/5/83	2	Cornell
89	Boss, Kevin	TE	6-6	253	1/11/84	R	Western Oregon
44	Bradshaw, Ahmad	RB	5-9	198	3/19/86	R	Marshall
17	Burress, Plaxico	WR	6-5	232	8/12/77	8	Michigan State
37	Butler, James	S	6-3	215	9/7/82	3	Georgia Tech
96	Cofield, Barry	DT	6-4	306	3/19/84	2	Northwestern
86	Collins, Jerome	TE	6-4	267	8/18/82	2	Notre Dame
52	Daniels, Tank	LB	6-3	248	12/17/81	2	Harding
99	Davis, Russell	DT	6-4	306	3/28/75	9	North Carolina
51	DeOssie, Zak	LB	6-4	249	5/24/84	R	Brown
66	Diehl, David	T	6-5	319	9/15/80	5	Illinois
35	Dockery, Kevin	CB	5-8	188	1/8/84	2	Mississippi State
22	Droughns, Reuben	RB	5-11	220	8/21/78	8	Oregon
18	Feagles, Jeff	P	6-1	215	3/7/66	20	Miami (FL)
39	Hedgecock, Madison	FB	6-3	266	8/27/81	3	North Carolina
87	Hixon, Domenik	WR	6-2	182	10/8/84	2	Akron
27	Jacobs, Brandon	RB	6-4	264	7/6/82	3	So. Illinois
43	Johnson, Michael	S	6-2	207	5/9/84	R	Arizona
61	Koets, Adam	T	6-5	300	1/7/84	R	Oregon State
13	Lorenzen, Jared	QB	6-4	285	2/14/81	3	Kentucky
29	Madison, Sam	CB	5-11	180	4/23/74	11	Louisville
10	Manning, Eli	QB	6-4	225	1/3/81	4	Mississippi
88	Matthews, Michael	TE	6-4	270	10/9/83	R	Georgia Tech
67	McKenzie, Kareem	T	6-6	327	5/24/79	7	Penn State
25	McQuarters, R.W.	CB	5-10	194	12/21/76	10	Oklahoma State
55	Mitchell, Kawika	LB	6-1	253	10/10/79	5	South Florida
83	Moss, Sinorice	WR	5-8	185	12/28/83	2	Miami (FL)
60	O'Hara, Shaun	C	6-3	303	6/23/77	8	Rutgers
58	Pierce, Antonio	LB	6-1	238	10/26/78	7	Arizona
33	Pope, Geoffrey	DB	6-0	186	6/21/84	R	Howard
98	Robbins, Fred	DT	6-4	317	3/25/77	8	Wake Forest
31	Ross, Aaron	CB	6-0	197	9/15/82	R	Texas
65	Ruegamer, Grey	G	6-4	299	6/11/76	9	Arizona State
69	Seubert, Rich	G	6-3	310	3/30/79	7	Western Illinois
12	Smith, Steve	WR	5-11	195	5/6/85	R	USC
76	Snee, Chris	G	6-3	317	1/18/82	4	Boston College
92	Strahan, Michael	DE	6-5	255	11/21/71	15	Texas Southern
71	Tollefson, Dave	DE	6-4	255	7/10/82	1	N.W. Missouri State
81	Toomer, Amani	WR	6-3	203	9/8/74	12	Michigan
53	Torbor, Reggie	LB	6-2	250	1/25/81	4	Auburn
91	Tuck, Justin	DE	6-5	274	3/29/83	3	Notre Dame
9	Tynes, Lawrence	K	6-1	202	6/3/78	4	Troy State
85	Tyree, David	WR	6-0	206	1/3/80	5	Syracuse
72	Umenyiora, Osi	DE	6-3	261	11/16/81	5	Troy State
26	Ware, Danny	RB	6-0	234	2/18/85	R	Georgia
23	Webster, Corey	CB	6-0	202	3/2/82	3	LSU
79	Whimper, Guy	T	6-5	302	5/21/83	2	East Carolina
59	Wilkinson, Gerris	LB	6-3	231	4/5/83	2	Georgia Tech
28	Wilson, Gibril	S	6-0	209	11/12/81	4	Tennessee
2	Wright, Anthony	QB	6-1	211	2/14/76	9	South Carolina
75	Wright, Manny	DT	6-5	345	4/13/84	3	USC

NEW YORK GIANTS

Jay Alford (93)
Defensive Tackle

Chase Blackburn (57)
Linebacker

Kevin Boothe (77)
Guard

Kevin Boss (89)
Tight End

Ahmad Bradshaw (44)
Running Back

Plaxico Burress (17)
Wide Receiver

James Butler (37)
Safety

Barry Cofield (96)
Defensive Tackle

Jerome Collins (86)
Tight End

Tank Daniels (52)
Linebacker

Russell Davis (99)
Defensive Tackle

Zak DeOssie (51)
Linebacker

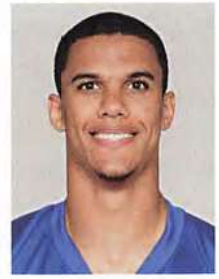
David Diehl (66)
Tackle

Kevin Dockery (35)
Cornerback

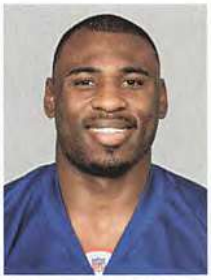
Reuben Droughns (22)
Running Back

Jeff Feagles (18)
Punter

Madison Hedgecock (39)
Fullback



Domenik Hixon (87)
Wide Receiver



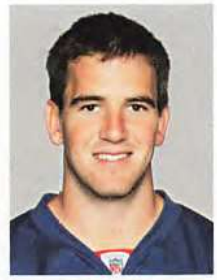
Brandon Jacobs (27)
Running Back

Michael Johnson (43)
Safety

Adam Koets (61)
Tackle

Jared Lorenzen (13)
Quarterback

Sam Madison (29)
Cornerback



Eli Manning (10)
Quarterback

Michael Matthews (88)
Tight End

Kareem McKenzie (67)
Tackle

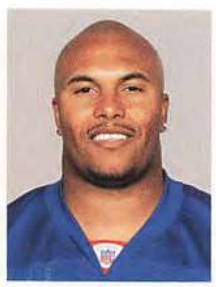
R.W. McQuarters (25)
Cornerback

NFC CHAMPION

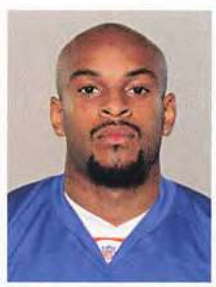
Kawika Mitchell (55)
Linebacker

Sinorice Moss (83)
Wide Receiver

Shaun O'Hara (60)
Center



Antonio Pierce (58)
Linebacker

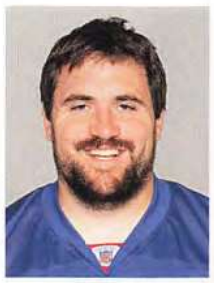


Geoffrey Pope (33)
Defensive Back

Fred Robbins (98)
Defensive Tackle

Aaron Ross (31)
Cornerback

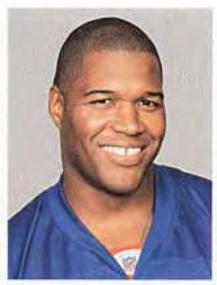
Grey Ruegamer (65)
Guard



Rich Seubert (69)
Guard

Steve Smith (12)
Wide Receiver

Chris Snee (76)
Guard



Michael Strahan (92)
Defensive End

Dave Tollefson (71)
Defensive End

Amani Toomer (81)
Wide Receiver

Reggie Torbor (53)
Linebacker

Justin Tuck (91)
Defensive End

Lawrence Tynes (9)
Kicker

David Tyree (85)
Wide Receiver

Osi Umenyiora (72)
Defensive End

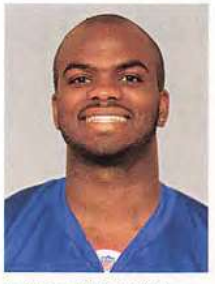
Danny Ware (26)
Running Back

Corey Webster (23)
Cornerback

Guy Whimper (79)
Tackle

Gerris Wilkinson (59)
Linebacker

Gibril Wilson (28)
Safety



Anthony Wright (2)
Quarterback

Manny Wright (75)
Defensive Tackle

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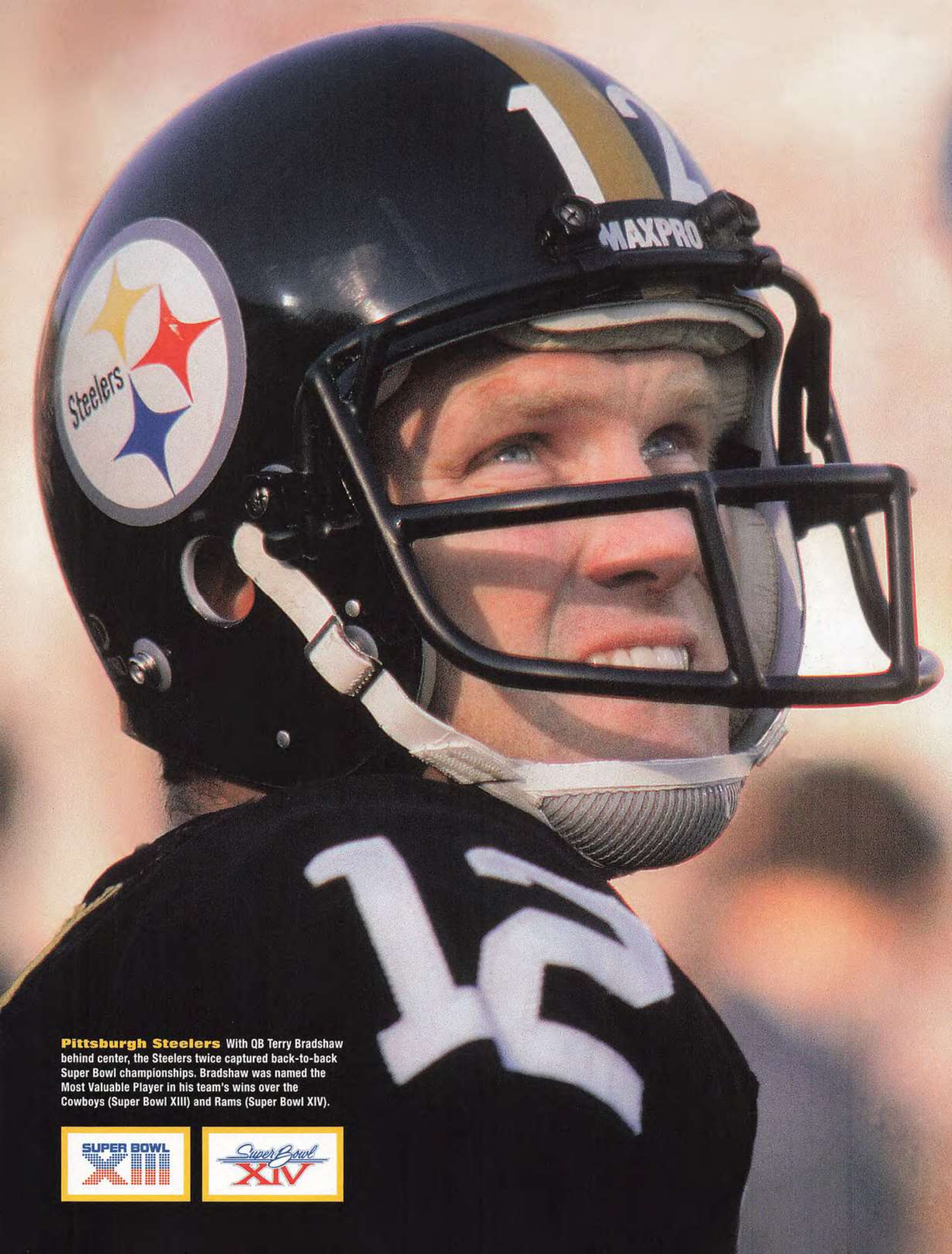


Pittsburgh Steelers With QB Terry Bradshaw behind center, the Steelers twice captured back-to-back Super Bowl championships. Bradshaw was named the Most Valuable Player in his team's wins over the Cowboys (Super Bowl XIII) and Rams (Super Bowl XIV).

SUPER BOWL XIII

Super Bowl XIV

Back to Back BRILLIANCE

To repeat as Super Bowl champion takes talent, luck, and desire...plus a nod from the "football gods."

by Vic Carucci

Jon Gruden often speaks of the "football gods," those legendary coaches and players who are deceased but who still keep a watchful eye on the game they loved.

George Halas...Vince Lombardi...Paul Brown...George Allen...Johnny Unitas...Walter Payton...Bill Walsh. These men stand as the game's spiritual guardians, always ready to impose their wrath on anyone who gets a little too fat and happy with his accomplishments.

Shortly after coaching Tampa Bay to a lopsided victory over the Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII, Gruden made certain to remind his players that the previous year's two Super Bowl participants—the New England Patriots and St. Louis Rams—didn't even reach the playoffs that season. He told them it was the price those teams paid for angering the "football gods."

"They're waiting for the Super Bowl champions to go to another banquet, to go have another steak dinner and another big piece of cherry pie," warned Gruden. "They want you to just fatten up like a big, red tomato so that they can take a big bite out of you."

Apparently, the gods weren't too happy with how the Buccaneers or the Raiders comported themselves, either. Both teams missed the playoffs the year after squaring off for the Lombardi Trophy.

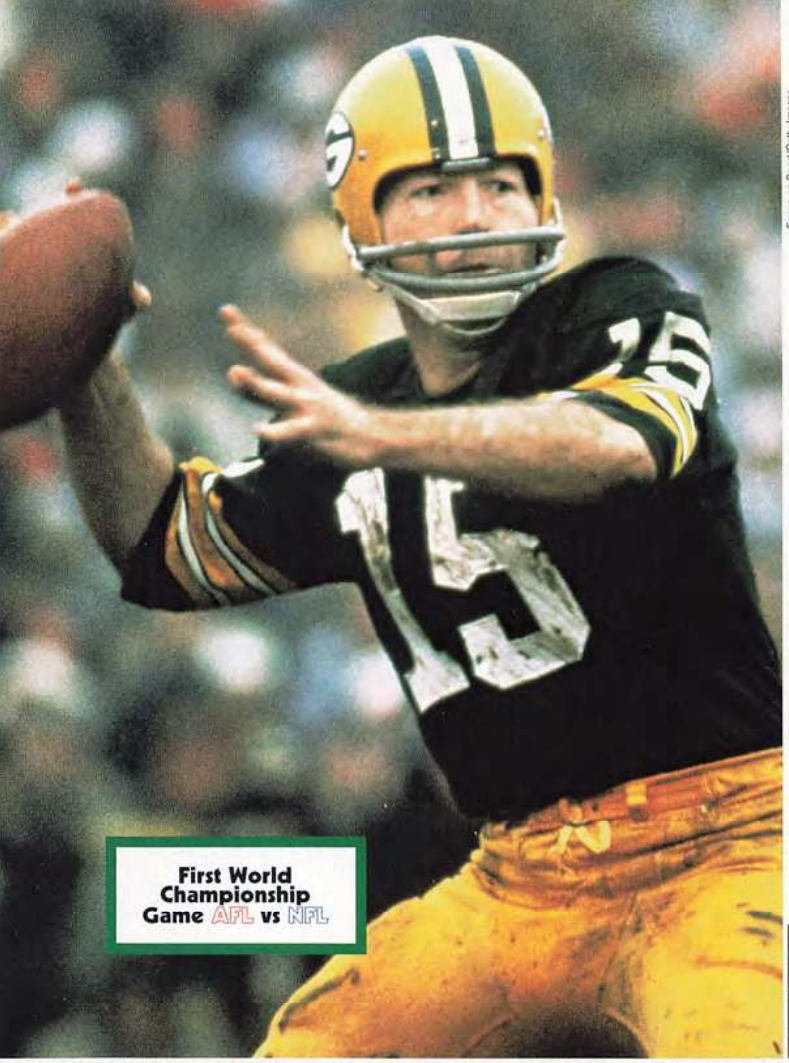
Whether it's a case of being too smug or too weary from an extra-long season and an extra-short and extra-busy offseason, repeating as a Super Bowl champion is a difficult proposition. Just seven teams—the Green Bay Packers, Miami Dolphins, Pittsburgh Steelers, San Francisco 49ers, Dallas Cowboys, Denver Broncos, and the Patriots—have done it in the game's 41-year history. And unlike America's three other major sports leagues, no NFL team has pulled off a three-peat.

"It's almost exponentially more difficult to win the second [Super Bowl] than it is to win the first," says Jerry Kramer, the legendary offensive guard who helped the Packers capture Super Bowls I and II. "The first time you can sneak up on people; the second time you're not going to sneak up on anyone."

"I think the challenge of repeating is certainly much bigger than the challenge of getting there," adds Colts head coach Tony Dungy, whose 2007 squad—despite going 13-3 and winning the AFC South—failed in its bid to go back-to-back, losing to San Diego in the divisional playoffs.

And getting there, particularly after a Super Bowl triumph or even a loss in the big game, is tough enough. The first major obstacle comes from playing one of the league's more difficult schedules. Then toss in the fact that Super Bowl teams make more prime-time appearances than

Fred Roe/Getty Images



Focus on Sport/Getty Images

other clubs (the Colts had five this season), limiting those customary one o'clock kickoffs that allow for a regular routine of preparation and travel. Opponents also tend to be motivated to perform at their best when facing the best. So-called weaker clubs can make their mark, and perhaps their entire season, by knocking off the defending Super Bowl or conference champions.

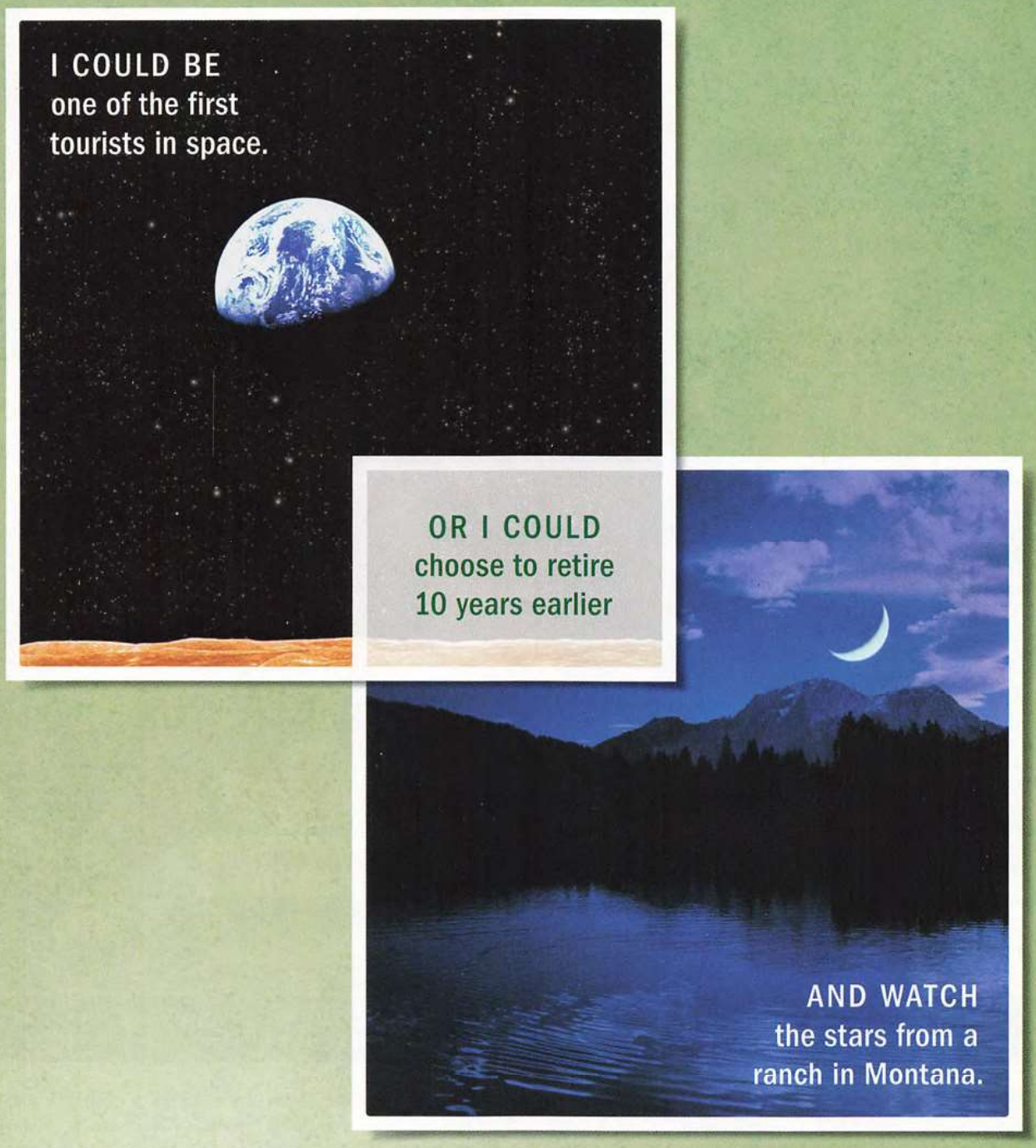
Brandon Short was a rookie outside linebacker for the New York Giants in 2000 when they captured the NFC East crown and then outclassed the Eagles and Vikings in the playoffs on their way to Super Bowl XXXV. The following season, Short saw team after team line up across the line of scrimmage with a greater sense of purpose. And the Giants weren't ready for the challenge.

"We didn't have that same hunger as when we were just trying to prove to people that we were for real," Short says of that 7-9 follow-up campaign. "When you know you're good but no one else knows you're good, you want to show the world what you already know. But [once] the world knows it, the most difficult thing is to go out and do it week in and week out."

It is a calamity that has sunk many a Super Bowl winner as well. Owners, general managers, and coaches are all smiles as they join players in hoisting the Lombardi Trophy under a shower of confetti in a wild midfield celebration. The scene is then repeated a few days later along a parade route back in the champion's hometown.

Green Bay Packers **Bart Starr** (top left) **takes aim downfield during the Packers' Super Bowl I win over Kansas City.** (Below) **CBS' Frank Gifford holds the microphone while NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle presents the Super Bowl II trophy to Green Bay head coach Vince Lombardi after the Packers beat Oakland.**

Vernon Biever/WireImage/Getty Images



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Miami Dolphins Jake Scott (left) returns one of his two interceptions in Super Bowl VII, preserving both Miami's win over Washington and the first perfect season in NFL history. Larry Csonka (right) rushed for 145 yards and scored a pair of touchdowns in the Dolphins' Super Bowl VIII triumph against Minnesota.

But that euphoria doesn't last long. Within a month comes the start of the NFL's free agency period and, to no one's surprise, players who help teams win championships become prime targets once they hit the open market. Those big-money offers, combined with the salary cap constraints Super Bowl teams face as a result of building a contender, inevitably lead to a loss of top talent.

All of a sudden, the defending champs have holes to fill. Those same cap challenges make it tough to reload through free agency, and the fact they are drafting at the bottom of each round creates another impediment. Replacement players may not bring enough experience or the same level of talent, or they could disrupt team chemistry.

Finally, let's remember there are certain to be at least a few players under contract who believe they're not being paid well enough for their championship contributions and may express that dissatisfaction publicly.

The personnel losses suffered by the Colts following last year's Super Bowl win are the norm and included starting cornerbacks Jason David (to the Saints) and Nick Harper (to Tennessee), along with linebacker Cato June (who was scooped up by Gruden's Buccaneers). They also got stung by the unexpected retirement of All-Pro tackle Tarik Glenn.

It's no coincidence that half of the back-to-back Super Bowl victories took place during the game's first 14 years when the NFL had fewer teams, no unrestricted free agency, and no salary cap. It was also in this era when the Dolphins posted the NFL's first perfect season.

"The biggest thing we had in the '70s was that our players never took us to the brink," says Steelers owner Dan Rooney. "They felt they would do better with the success of the team rather than themselves. Today, that's not always the case."

Lombardi's Packers—with Bart Starr throwing to Max McGee and Boyd Dowler, and Jim Taylor running behind one of the most precisely executed sweeps the game has ever seen—made winning the first two Super Bowls look easy. They beat the Chiefs and Raiders by a combined score of 68-24, with Starr the Most Valuable Player of both games.

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MICHAEL COHN - PACKERS FAN

HIGHLIGHT

Mike starts his days with a shave and a visit to NFL.com. First, the morning stubble. Then, some replays from last night's action. After showering, it's a few more minutes of highlights, stats, and stories before he's off to work.

COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	PP	TF	FF	FM	CH
03	PACKERS	00	01	01	07	03
04	PACKERS	00	01	00	11	02
05	PACKERS	09	03	05	13	03
06	PACKERS	23	07	04	17	01
07	PACKERS	87	11	06	25	02
FAN CAREER		119	23	16	73	11

5'11" • WT: 205 | POSITION: HISTORY TEACHER
DOB: 09-15-79, WAUSAU, WI | HOME: OSHKOSH, WI

PP - POINTS PROVEN, TF - TEAMS FOLLOWED, FF - FOAM FINGERS,
FM - FAVRE MEMORABILIA, CH - CHEESE HEADS

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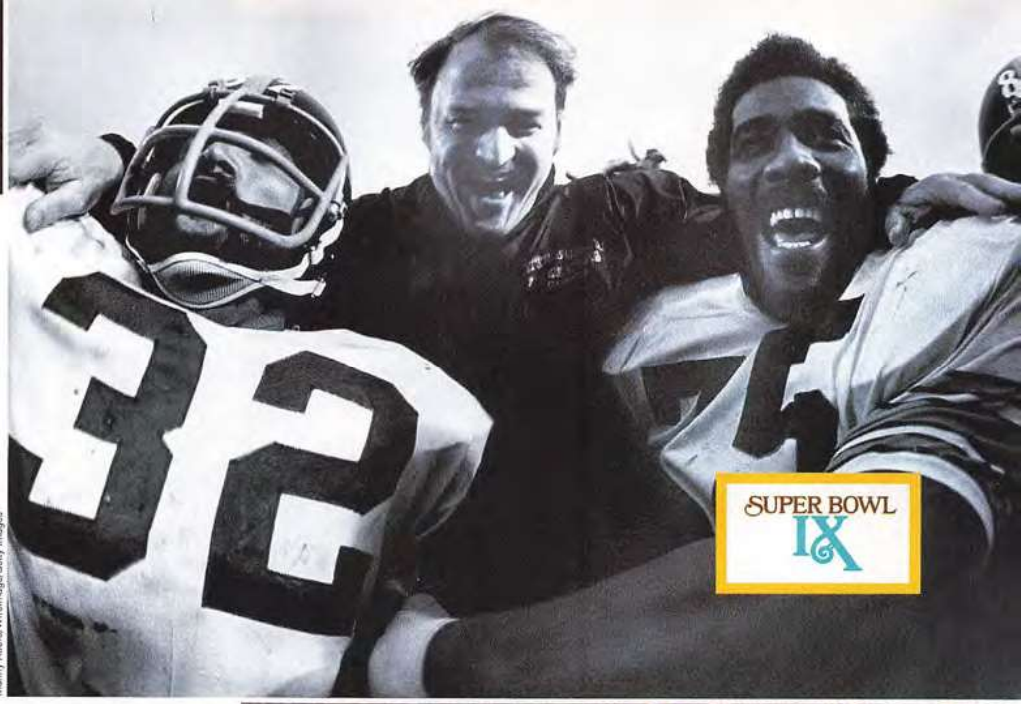
Pittsburgh Steelers (Right) **Head coach Chuck Noll celebrates with Franco Harris (No. 32) and Joe Greene (No. 75) after Pittsburgh's Super Bowl IX win.** (Below) **Lynn Swann outjumps Dallas' Mark Washington during the Steelers' Super Bowl X victory.**



Manny Rubio/Wirelmage/Getty Images

"I heard a story about how, as the Packers were getting ready to play the Chiefs, Lombardi was looking at film of Kansas City's defense and said, 'I don't like playing this team because we can't run the football well against them. I think we're going to have to throw the ball to win,'" says CBS analyst and former Giants quarterback Phil Simms, MVP of Super Bowl XXI.

"Lombardi kept looking at film, trying to figure out a way to run the football because that was what he wanted to do. But when Lombardi realized the Packers were better off passing, he said, 'Bart Starr, win the game by throwing.' And he did."

Starr threw for 250 yards and two touchdowns—both to McGee—in Green Bay's 35-10 victory. He was similarly impressive in Super Bowl II against the Raiders, completing 13 of 24 passes for 202 yards and a touchdown in what ultimately was Lombardi's final game at the helm of the Packers.

Six years passed before another Super Bowl repeat took place. It started in 1972 when the Dolphins put together an unblemished 14-0 regular-season campaign on their way to a 14-7 victory over Washington in Super Bowl VII. A year later, despite losing twice during the season, they may have been even better and gained their second title with a 24-7 romp over Minnesota in Super Bowl VIII. Larry Csonka bruised the Vikings for 145 yards and two touchdowns on 33 carries, while Miami's "No Name Defense" forced the game's only two turnovers.

The Vikings would play in a second straight Super Bowl, but history only notes that appearance because it launched one of the greatest dynasties in football. The Steelers' 16-6 victory over Minnesota in Super Bowl IX marked their first of four Super Bowl wins in a six-year span, and paved the way for Hall of Fame inductions for nine Pittsburgh players as well as head coach Chuck Noll and owner Art Rooney.

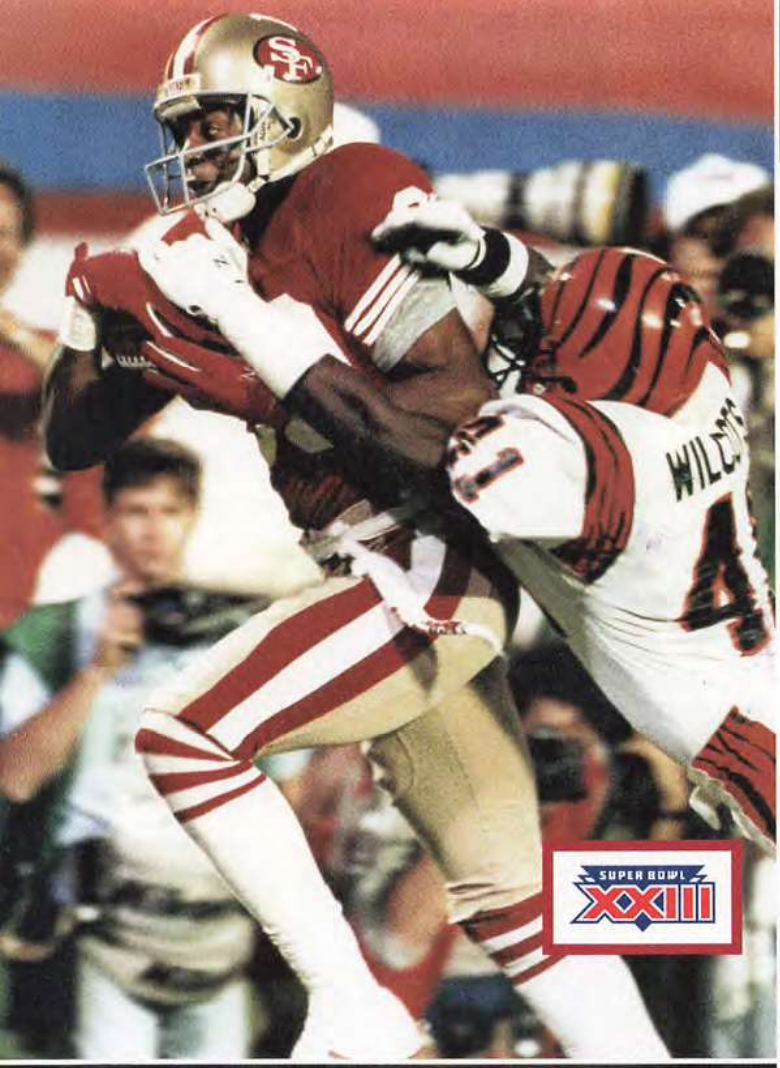
"In a period of six years, there were numerous challenges to us, and sometimes we failed," says Terry Bradshaw, the Steelers' Hall of Fame quarterback. "But when we won, regardless of the score, we recognized how fortunate we were. Maybe we got the right bounce. Maybe we got the right call. Maybe we had a little bit of luck here and there.

"[But] we won the games we were supposed to win, and we also fought hard and won most of the games against teams that were our equal. We were pretty resilient."

Another of Pittsburgh's Hall of Fame players, running back Franco Harris, tore through the Vikings' vaunted "Purple People Eaters" defense for 158 yards and a touchdown to earn Super Bowl IX's MVP award. For an encore in 1975, the Steelers posted a 12-2 regular-season mark, knocked the Colts and Raiders from the AFC playoffs, and then disposed of the Cowboys, 21-17, in Super Bowl X.

Pittsburgh's bid for a third straight crown, however, ended with a 24-7 loss to Oakland in the 1976 AFC title game. And despite winning the AFC Central division again the following year, the Steelers were eliminated in the conference playoffs.

Robert Riger/Getty Images



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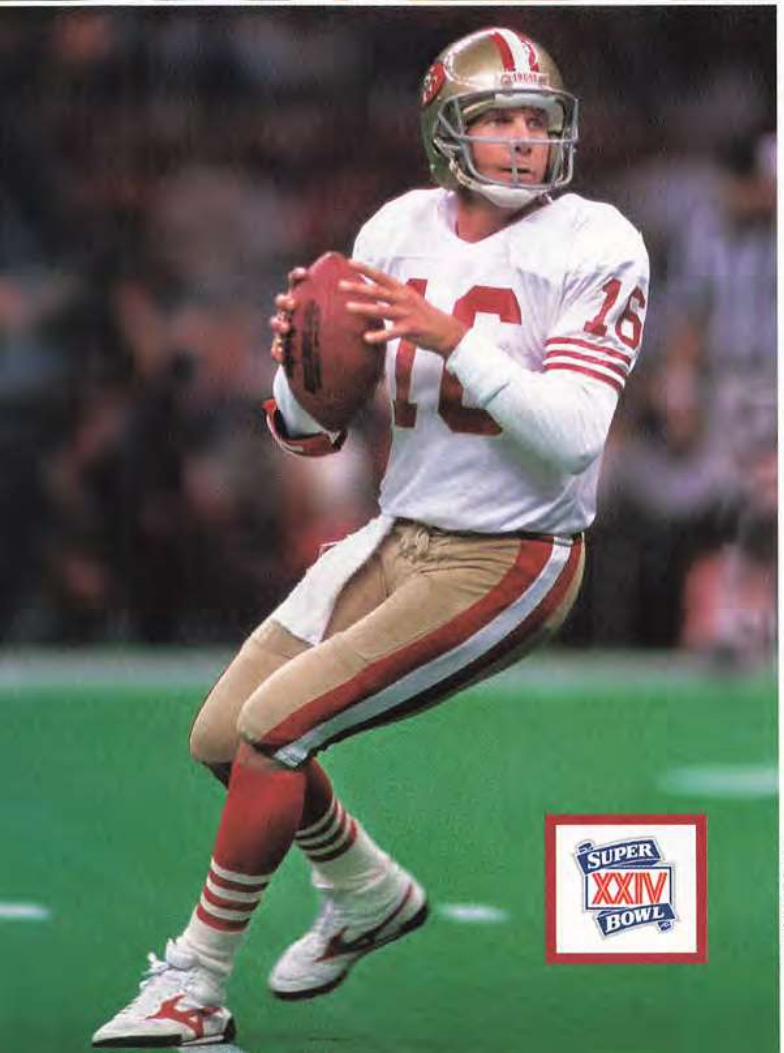

Manny Rubio/US Presswire

San Francisco 49ers (Left) **Jerry Rice tries to break from the clutches of Bengals defensive back Solomon Wilcots after making a fourth-quarter reception during Super Bowl XXIII.** (Below) **Joe Montana was a three-time Super Bowl MVP, earning one of those awards for his 297-yard, five-TD effort in Super Bowl XXIV.**

But they returned to the big game in 1978, facing Dallas in what became the first rematch in Super Bowl history. The result was the same, this time with Bradshaw carting away MVP honors for his 318-yard, four-TD showcase that produced a 35-31 victory. The Steelers would then complete their second Super Bowl repeat—an unprecedented and still unmatched feat—by pulling away late to defeat the Los Angeles Rams, 31-19, in Super Bowl XIV. Bradshaw (309 yards, two TD passes) was again selected MVP.

"For whatever reason, the bigger the game was, the more comfortable I felt," says Bradshaw. "[In those situations] you don't have time to be panicky. You have to execute plays, and you cannot do that if you panic. Your mind won't function. Your brain gets cloudy."

That was never a problem for Hall of Famer Joe Montana, who led the 49ers, once an NFL pushover, to back-to-back Super Bowl wins—20-16 over Cincinnati in Super Bowl XXIII and 55-10 over Denver in Super Bowl XXIV. Montana's mastery of head coach Bill Walsh's "West Coast" offense, which emphasized horizontal passing, meshed perfectly with the explosive running of Roger Craig to create a combination that opposing defenses simply could not contain. San Francisco also fielded a formidable and sometimes overlooked defense, led by Hall of Fame defensive back Ronnie Lott.

In the final minutes against the Bengals, Montana was at his "Joe Cool" best, leading the 49ers on an 11-play, 92-yard drive capped by his winning touchdown pass to John Taylor with 34 seconds left.

The following year's title run didn't extract nearly as much drama. After a 14-2 regular season and then battering the Vikings and the Rams in the playoffs, San Francisco dominated Denver in the Super Bowl. Montana delivered three TD passes before halftime and finished with five overall in what still stands as the biggest rout in the game's history.

While the 49ers were basking in that triumph—their fourth Super Bowl crown in nine years—Jimmy Johnson's Cowboys were healing from the numerous lumps taken during a 1-15 campaign. As unlikely as it may have appeared at the time, Dallas would soon be playing in the Super Bowl and joining that list of back-to-back champions, beating the Bills in consecutive confrontations by a combined tally of 82-30.

In Super Bowl XXVII, Buffalo had no answers for the Cowboys' offensive triplets—Hall of Fame quarterback Troy Aikman, Hall of Fame receiver Michael Irvin, and (soon to be Hall of Fame) running back Emmitt Smith—while a punishing defense forced nine turnovers in a 52-17 victory. Dallas prevailed again the following year, 30-13, taking the lead for good on Smith's TD run midway through the third quarter.

The Cowboys then established themselves as the team of the '90s by beating Pittsburgh in Super Bowl XXX at Sun Devil Stadium, marking their third title in four years. It could be argued that Dallas had the best shot of all to win three straight Super Bowls—and maybe even four. In the year between their second and third crowns, the Cowboys reached the NFC Championship Game only to be turned back by San Francisco.

"I don't think you can bring up another team in the 1990s to compare with us—we were that dominant and that talented, offensively and defensively," says Smith. "We had the whole package. If we got beat, we got beat because the other team played very well and we played poorly. They were the [better] team on that particular day, but that's all it was."

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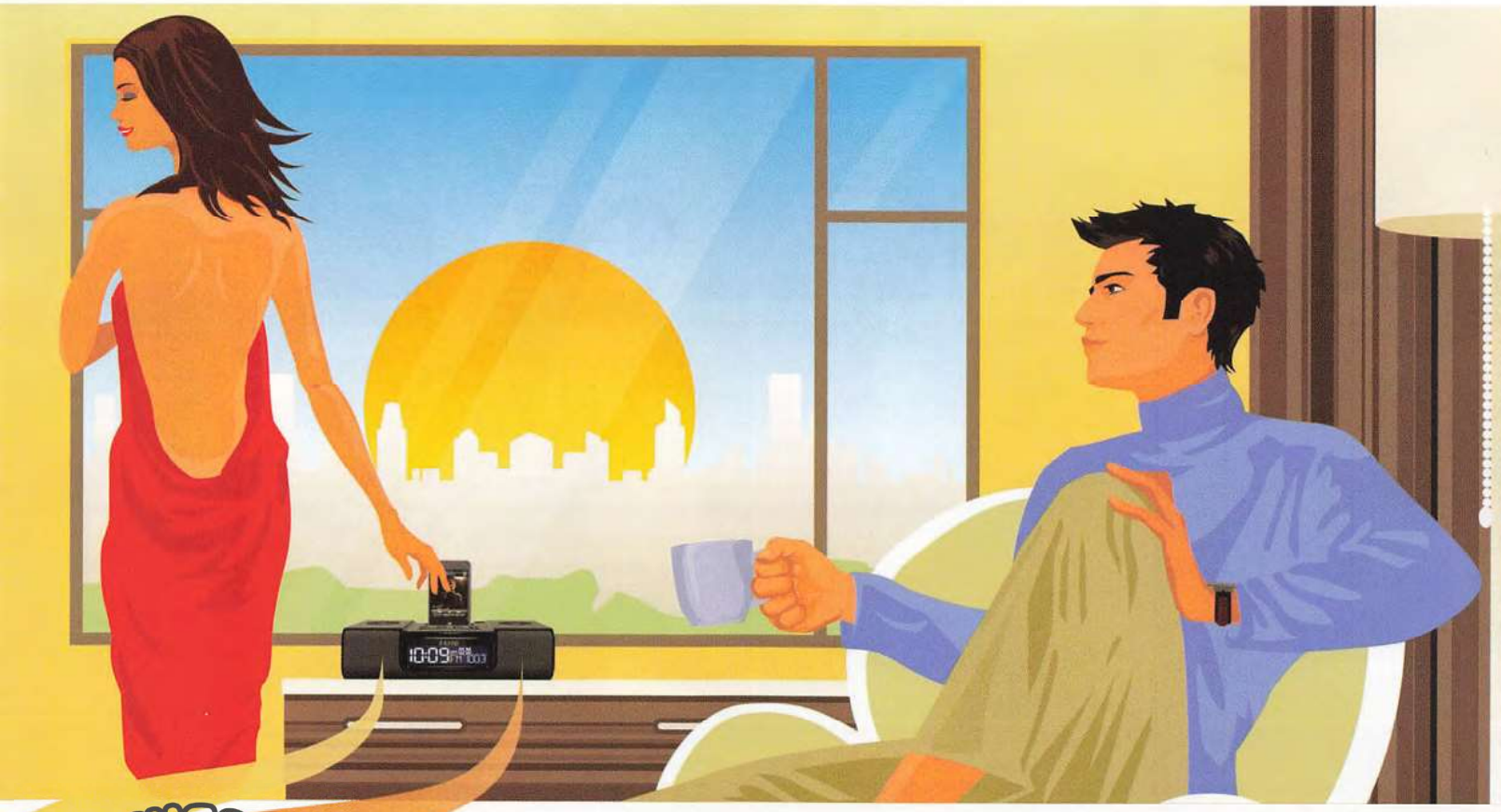

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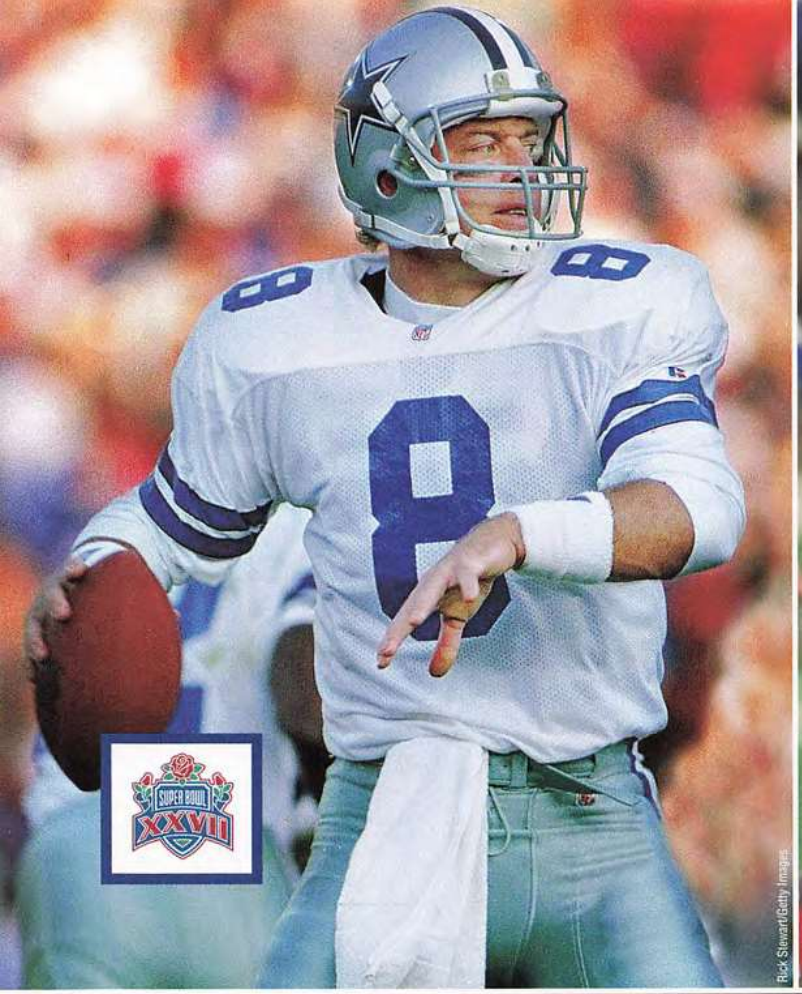

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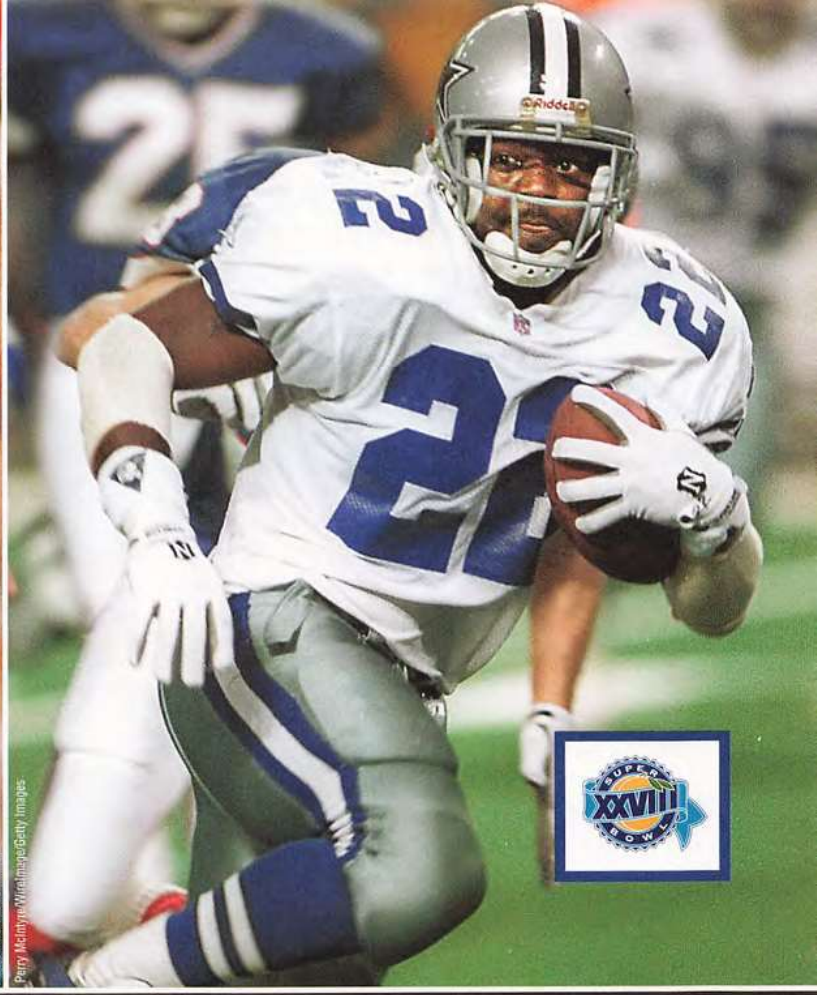

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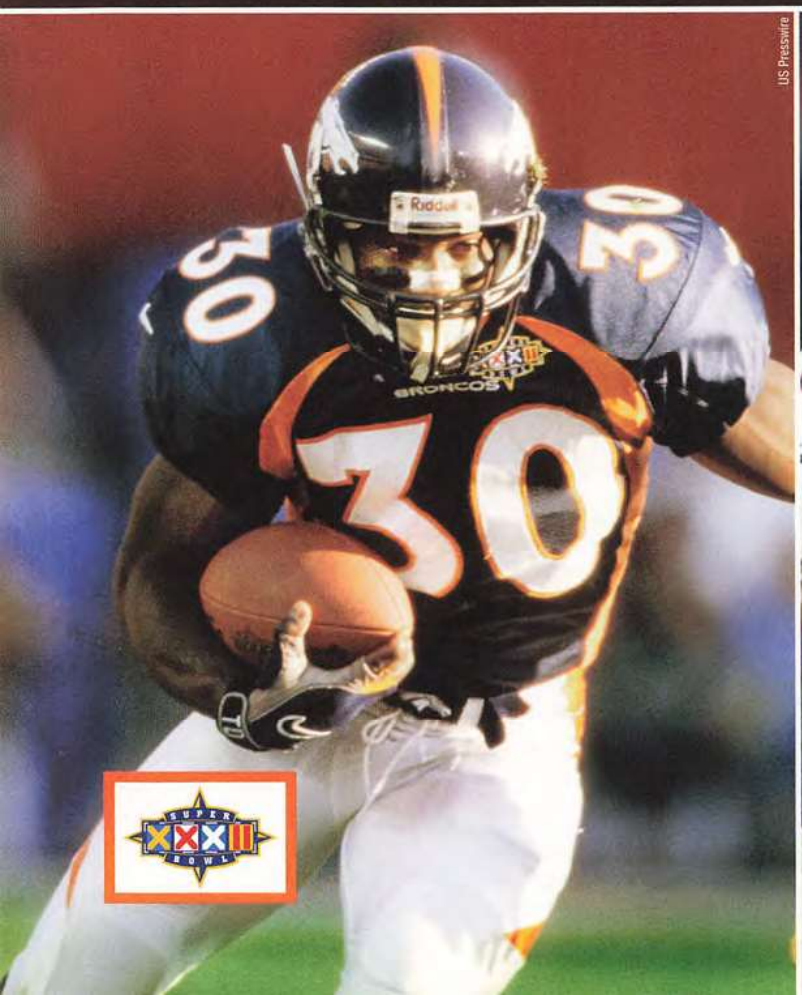
Dallas Cowboys Troy Aikman (top left) searches for a receiver during the Cowboys' 52-17 win over Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVII, a title that came just three years after Dallas finished 1-15. Emmitt Smith (top right) adds to his rushing total in the team's Super Bowl XXVIII triumph against the Bills, a rematch of the previous year's game. **Denver Broncos** Terrell Davis (bottom left) rushed for 157 yards in the Broncos' 31-24 win over Green Bay in Super Bowl XXXII that snapped the NFC's 13-game Super Bowl win streak. (Bottom right) No. 80 Rod Smith congratulates John Elway after Elway's touchdown run during Denver's Super Bowl XXXIII victory over Atlanta.



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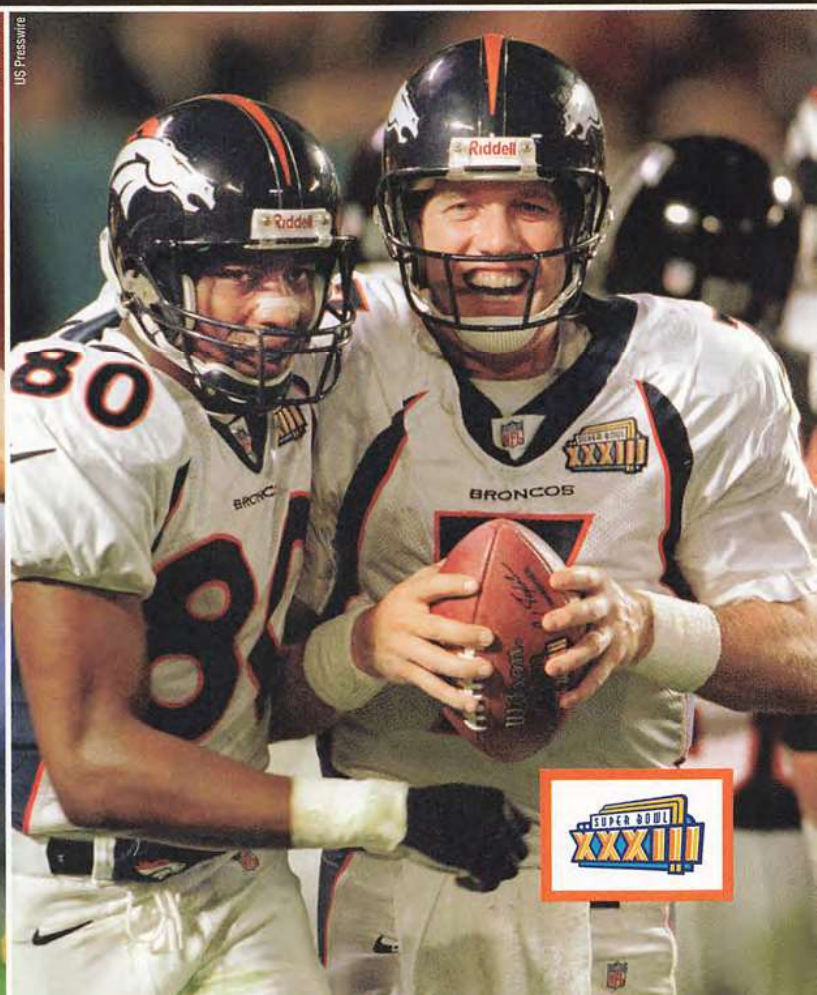
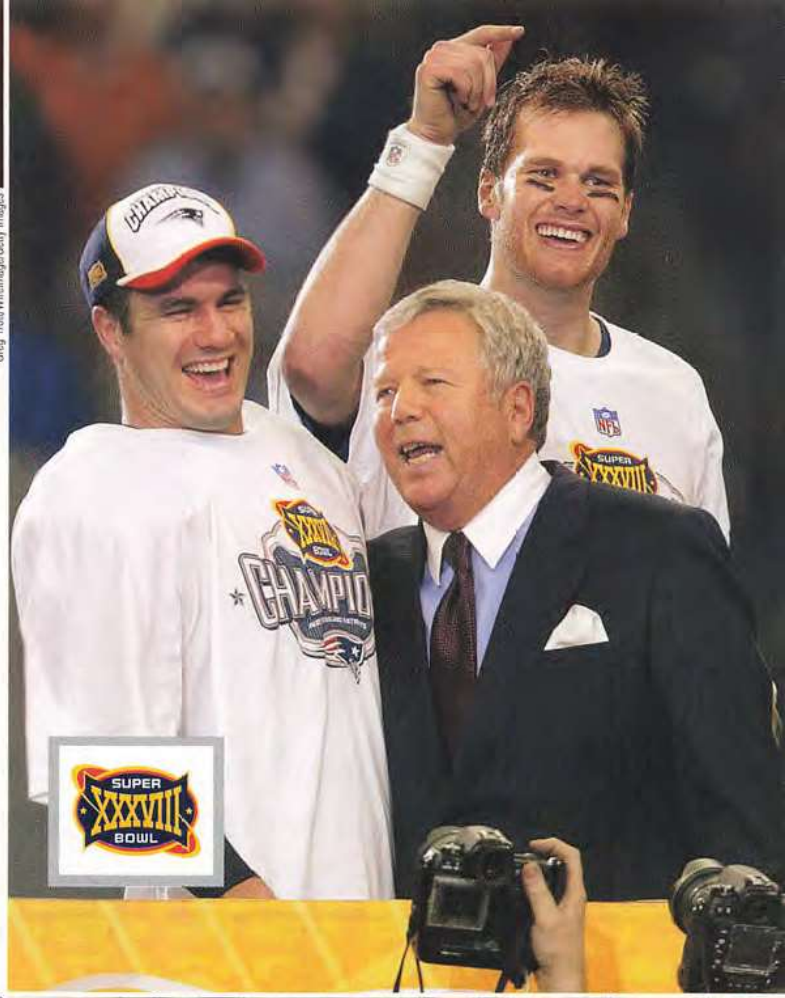


US Presswire

New England Patriots Adam Vinatieri and Tom Brady (right) are joined on the podium by team owner Robert Kraft following Super Bowl XXXVIII. Vinatieri kicked a 41-yard field goal with four seconds to go to beat the Panthers, 32-29. (Below) Deion Branch scampers away from the Eagles' Keith Adams after making one of his 11 catches during New England's Super Bowl XXXIX win.



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In the latter half of the decade, the baton was passed to the Broncos, whose 31-24 triumph over Green Bay in Super Bowl XXXII snapped the NFC's 13-year domination of the game. Denver QB John Elway never experienced a greater sense of relief on the field than when John Mobley knocked down Brett Favre's fourth-down pass to seal that win.

"I felt like the [weight of the] world was taken off my shoulders," recalls Elway, who had come up short in his first three trips to the Super Bowl. "I felt that my career was legitimized."

While Denver had squeezed into the playoffs as a wild card team in 1997, it was a much different story the following season. The Broncos went an AFC-best 14-2 behind an Elway-fueled attack that erupted for 501 points. In the team's 34-19 Super Bowl victory over Atlanta, he threw for 336 yards and rushed for a score to earn MVP honors. A now fulfilled Elway retired after that game.

The Patriots carved out the NFL's most recent dynasty. Although they dipped briefly following that win over St. Louis in Super Bowl XXXVI, they roared back to capture back-to-back crowns—32-29 over Carolina in XXXVIII and 24-21 over Philadelphia in XXXIX—and match the Cowboys' run of three titles in four years. Bill Belichick's coaching, Tom Brady's quarterbacking, and a complex defensive scheme capable of twisting the best offensive minds into knots became the cornerstones for a level of dominance not thought possible in today's NFL.

And with their undefeated regular season in 2007, New England appears in position to add to that run. That's because Belichick draws on the time-honored method of building championship teams, showing a keen eye for talent by bringing on board unheralded draft choices and free agents who fit the team's system. Now you can throw in smart trades as well, since draft-day deals for Wes Welker and Randy Moss armed Brady with what many saw as the league's top receiving tandem.

When combined with vice president of player personnel Scott Pioli's shrewd management of the salary cap, it's given New England a double-dose of football brainpower.

Former Steelers coach Bill Cowher, now a studio analyst for CBS Sports, sees another reason why the Patriots have stayed on top.

"They've been able to play at a consistent level—they've kept a very simple approach to the game and realize success is achieved through a lot of hard work and a lot of good fortune," praises Cowher, whose teams twice lost AFC Championship Games to New England at Heinz Field.

Noll offered a similar perspective when speaking with one of his former Steelers players, Dungy, about what it takes to repeat as a Super Bowl champion.

"Coach Noll talked about never leaving your roots and not to ever think, 'OK, we accomplished this,' or, 'We can start at step four now; we know one, two, and three,'" Dungy says. "Always go back to step one, and start from the beginning."

The football gods would nod in approval.

Vic Carucci is the national editor of NFL.com. He has covered the NFL for 29 years and is a past president of the Professional Football Writers of America. He has authored eight books about football and is a regular host and analyst on Sirius NFL Radio.

Front & CENTER

THE QUARTERBACK POSITION HAS BECOME THE MOST IMPORTANT IN THE GAME. SO IS THE NEXT GENERATION OF NFL SIGNAL-CALLERS READY TO STEP UP?

by Don Pierson

The quest for quarterbacks remains constant. In the all-consuming search for "who's next" at pro football's most important position, the blueprint is fuzzy. Always was, always will be.

Because intangibles are so vital, quarterback potential is rarely as obvious as a 100 mph fastball. If great quarterback prospects stuck out like 7-foot power forwards, three-time Super Bowl winner Tom Brady wouldn't have been passed over 198 times in the 2000 NFL Draft before the Patriots made him their sixth-round selection.

The position is such that undrafted free agents like Tony Romo can replace No. 1 overall picks, while No. 1 overall picks—i.e., Tim Couch (Cleveland, 1999)—can be out of the league within five years.

Yet the search is not as random as it sometimes seems. There is a method to the madness. Scouts do not fill out their reports using blindfolds and darts. Of the 26 quarterbacks who have won Super Bowls, 14 were first-round draft choices, meaning that legends like the unwanted Johnny Unitas and the undiscovered Kurt Warner remain exceptions. The top of the draft is still the best place to look.

So it's no surprise that the three quarterbacks drafted in the first round in 2006—Tennessee's Vince Young (No. 3), Arizona's Matt Leinart (No. 10), and Denver's Jay Cutler (No. 11)—were the first in their class to win starting jobs for reasons other than injury. Young got promoted first and was quickly followed by Leinart and then Cutler, the same order in which they were selected.

Young's spectacular 30-2 record and national championship at the University of Texas was capped by his performance against USC in the BCS title game, where he out-passed Leinart and out-ran Reggie Bush. Yet, if there's an irony, it's that the multi-dimensional Young was expected to take longer than the other two to adapt to the pro game, which prizes pristine passing accuracy more than running ability.

Still, once he became a starter early in the 2006 season, he engineered a stunning turnaround, nearly steering a team that lost its first five games into the playoffs. Young threw for 2,200 yards and 12 TDs, and did not shy away from running, adding 522 rushing yards while scoring seven times. This year, the Titans reached the postseason.

Leinart's college record was an even more stunning 37-2, and he could boast both a Heisman Trophy and a national championship during his time at USC. Then, in his first year with the Cardinals, he started 11 games and amassed 2,547 passing yards with 11 touchdowns. Meanwhile, Cutler—who erased nearly every school passing standard in his time at Vanderbilt—started the Broncos' final five games of 2006 and owned the rookie trio's highest completion percentage (59.1) and best TD-to-interception ratio (9-to-5).

Career paths, however, seldom follow a straight line. Even quarterbacks who dazzle the league as rookies are susceptible to the sophomore blues once defenses adjust to what they've seen on film. Earlier this season, when a struggling Leinart found himself sharing playing time with former league MVP Kurt Warner, he expressed disappointment.

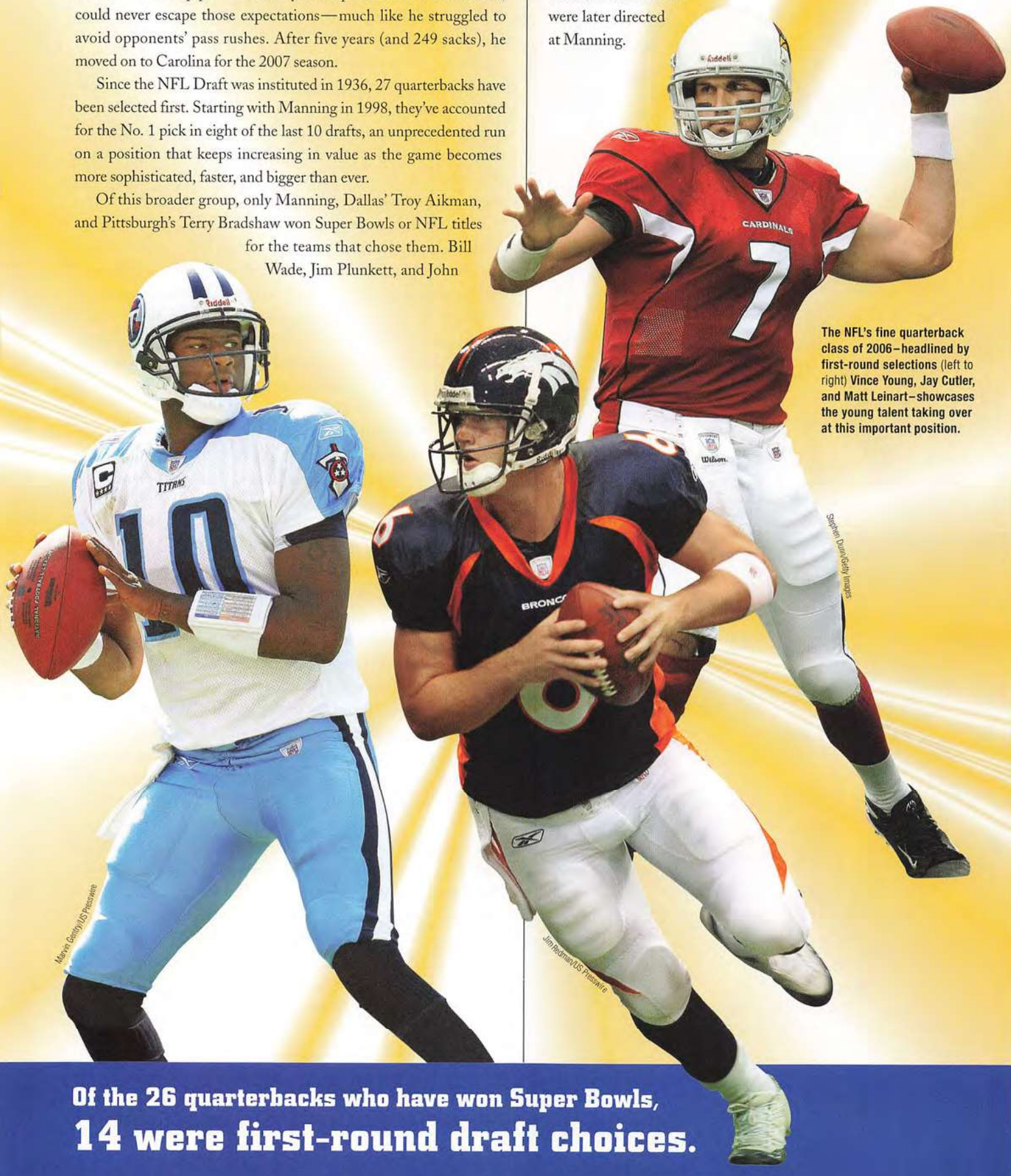
"I'd be lying if I said I was happy with the way things [are] going, but at the same time, it's pushing me to become a better football player," said Leinart, before being sidelined with a midseason injury.

Even someone as dominant behind center as the Colts' Peyton Manning needed nine seasons to reach the Super Bowl, during which time he listened to doubts about his ability to win the "big one."

Number one overall draft picks such as Manning carry an extra burden. As soon as their names are called, the expectation is that they'll win a Super Bowl, no matter how inadequate the team selecting them. Manning eventually reached that pinnacle. But David Carr, taken with the top pick in 2002 by the expansion Houston Texans, could never escape those expectations—much like he struggled to avoid opponents' pass rushes. After five years (and 249 sacks), he moved on to Carolina for the 2007 season.

Since the NFL Draft was instituted in 1936, 27 quarterbacks have been selected first. Starting with Manning in 1998, they've accounted for the No. 1 pick in eight of the last 10 drafts, an unprecedented run on a position that keeps increasing in value as the game becomes more sophisticated, faster, and bigger than ever.

Of this broader group, only Manning, Dallas' Troy Aikman, and Pittsburgh's Terry Bradshaw won Super Bowls or NFL titles for the teams that chose them. Bill Wade, Jim Plunkett, and John Elway won for others, though Elway gets an asterisk since Baltimore dealt him to Denver shortly after the 1983 draft. He reached five Super Bowls with the Broncos—the most of any quarterback in NFL history—but didn't win the title until his 15th and 16th seasons, after enduring the same doubts that were later directed at Manning.



The NFL's fine quarterback class of 2006–headlined by first-round selections (left to right) **Vince Young, Jay Cutler, and Matt Leinart–showcases the young talent taking over at this important position.**

Stephen Dunn/Getty Images

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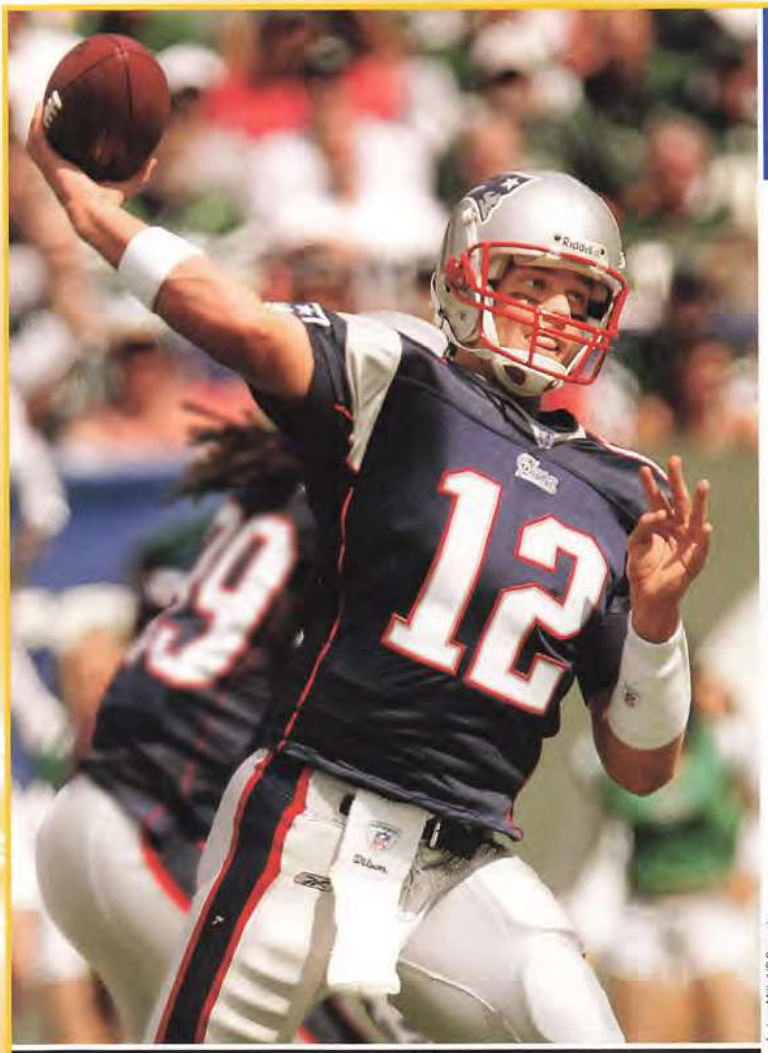
Of the 26 quarterbacks who have won Super Bowls,
14 were first-round draft choices.



Andrew Mills/US Presswire

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

Despite extensive scouting, identifying a standout quarterback remains an inexact science. The Patriots' Tom Brady (left) wasn't taken until the sixth round of the 2000 draft, yet he already has won three Super Bowl titles. Undrafted Tony Romo has guided the Cowboys to the playoffs in both of his years as a starter.

As challenging as it is to play quarterback in the NFL, nothing is more difficult than following a great player, which is why Steve Young's encore to Joe Montana in San Francisco was monumental and why Cutler's job in Denver is so daunting.

Cutler didn't directly follow Elway—Brian Griese and Jake Plummer, among others, came in between—but tell that to Broncos fans who always will measure success by No. 7. After Cutler engineered two comeback wins to start the 2007 season (still leaving him well behind Elway's NFL record of 47), he dared to bring up the name he knew was on everybody's mind.

"You guys are going to compare us whether we shy away from him or not," Cutler said. "Until we win the Super Bowl, people here are going to throw out John Elway's name. So we might as well embrace it. He's the greatest quarterback who ever played. Why not appreciate it?"

Maybe the Class of 2006 is special in this regard. In Tennessee, Young seamlessly took over for Steve McNair, who not only was popular, but also had quarterbacked the Titans to their lone Super Bowl appearance. And Leinart is already learning the value of resilience from his exchanges with Warner.

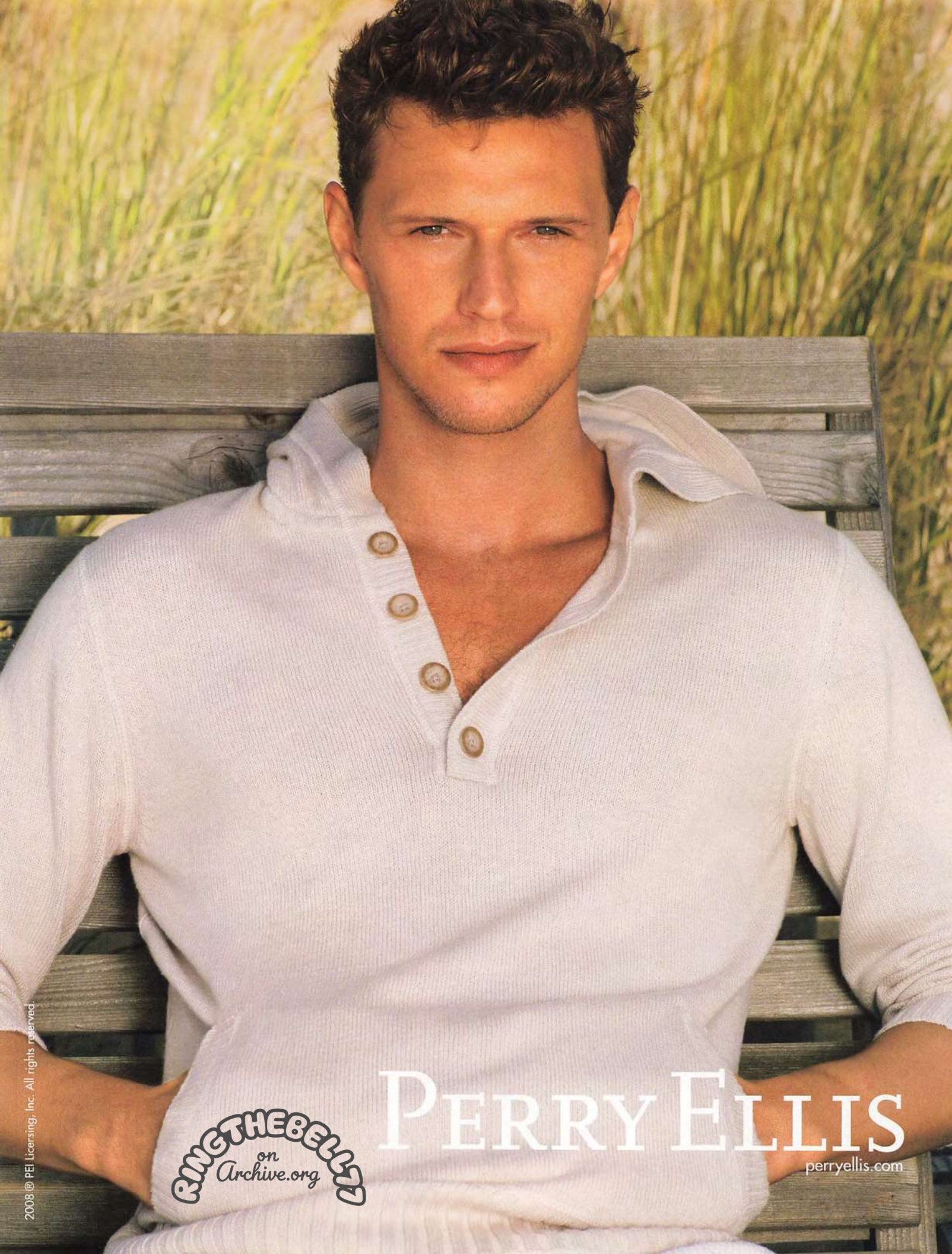
Still, every quarterback class will be measured by the 1983 draft, which produced six first-rounders. While only Elway won a Super Bowl, Buffalo's Jim Kelly reached four of them and Miami's Dan Marino and New England's Tony Eason got to one each. That year's other two first-round selections—Ken O'Brien of the New York Jets and Todd Blackledge of the Kansas City Chiefs—both helped get their teams to the playoffs and O'Brien once led the league in passing. Elway, Kelly, and Marino all made the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

There are occasional pretenders to the Class of '83. In 1999, expectations swelled when five quarterbacks were taken among the first 12 picks. Couch, Donovan McNabb, and Akili Smith went 1-2-3 with Daunte Culpepper and Cade McNown following at No. 11 and No. 12, respectively. But of that group, only McNabb and Culpepper remain in football and only McNabb with his original team, the Philadelphia Eagles. He took them to Super Bowl XXXIX, while Culpepper put the Vikings in the playoffs three times, once reaching the NFC Championship Game.

Until Warner burst on the scene in 1999 and won with the Rams in his second NFL season, no quarterback ever had captured a Super Bowl so early in his career. Then Brady won in his second season and so did Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger, who surpassed Brady as the youngest Super Bowl champion QB at age 23.

This recent spate of success only raises the stakes for other young signal-callers, putting more pressure on Young, Leinart, and Cutler as well as the 2007 class, led by first-rounders JaMarcus Russell (Oakland) and Brady Quinn (Cleveland).

As 1999 attests, few teams have the luxury to patiently develop prospects. The position is simply too crucial to wait for a starter to "come around." Two of Roethlisberger's 2004 colleagues, Eli Manning and Philip Rivers, were drafted ahead of him and, despite a fair amount of success, continue to feel the weight of expectations.



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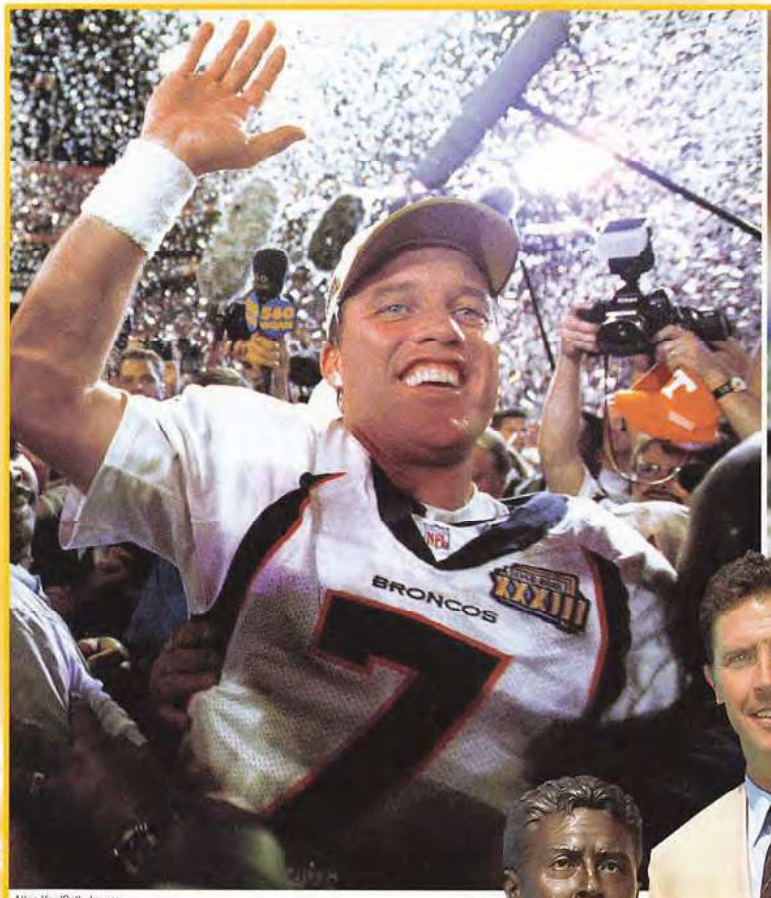

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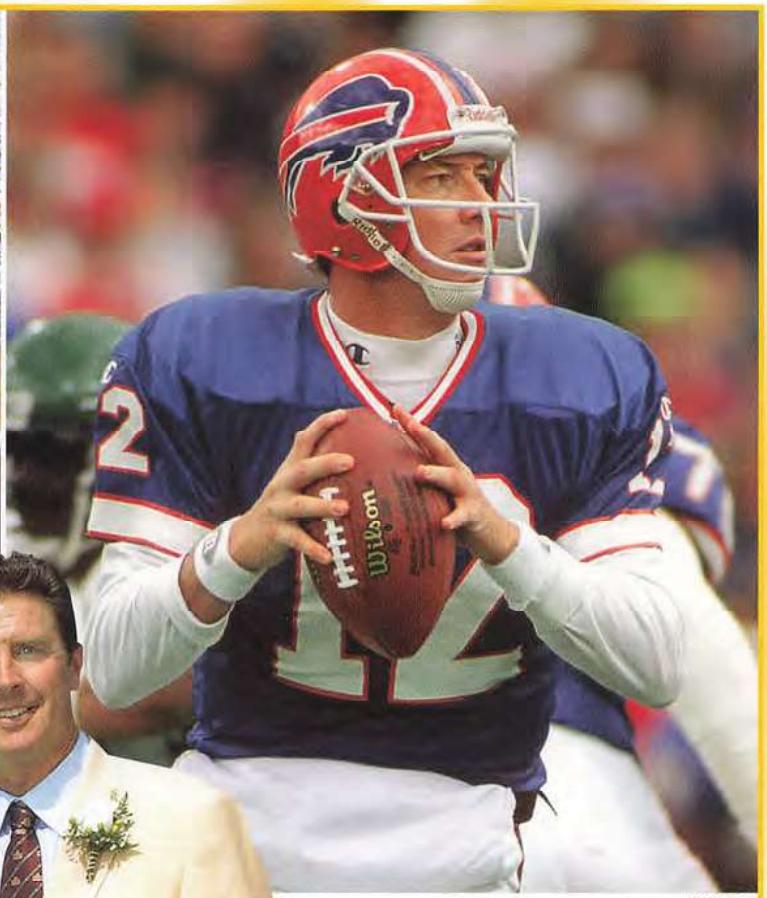
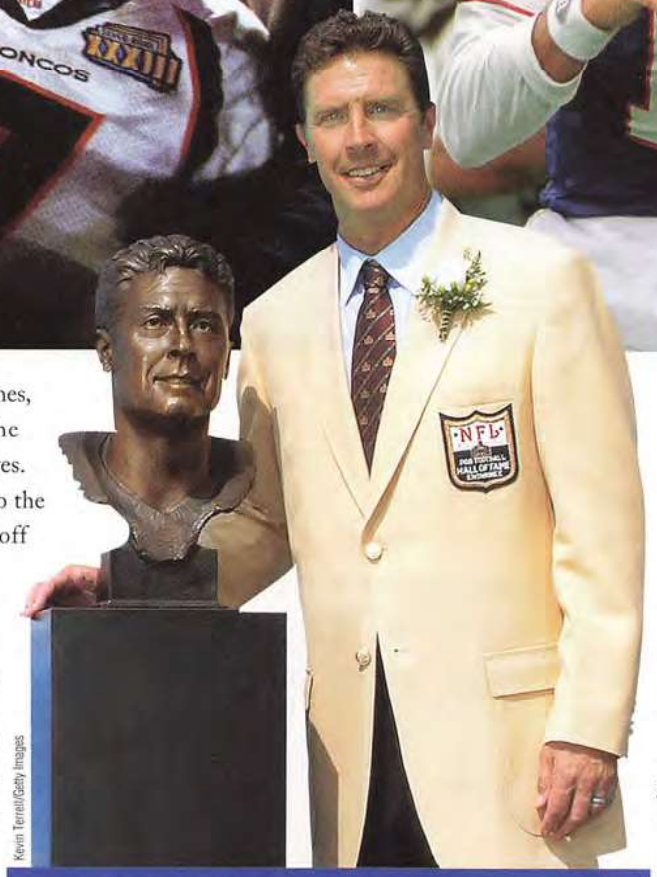


US Presswire

The impatience of owners, coaches, and fans can be matched by the impatience of the players themselves. As the Titans were about to lose to the Colts this season, Young stalked off the field early, risking criticism for showing up his teammates. Yet coach Jeff Fisher defended him.

"He's learning from things that happen, and as a young quarterback, things happen every week," Fisher said. "You need three or four years under your belt to really become comfortable, but with [Vince] in the shotgun or under center, it gives us a chance to win. I have no problem with his distaste for losing. That's OK."



Kevin Terrell/Getty Images

Every NFL quarterback class is measured against the Class of '83, which produced (clockwise, from top left) **Hall of Famers John Elway, Jim Kelly, and Dan Marino. Long-time starters Tony Eason, Todd Blackledge, and Ken O'Brien also were chosen in the first round that year.**

"Once you've selected your quarterback, the first factor for success is his credibility. Do his teammates seriously believe he can perform? That credibility may take time to establish. For one reason or another, the rest of the squad may not take him seriously at first."

In essence, Walsh was stressing that the important and intangible quality of leadership is crafted mainly through performance. It must be earned, not granted. Montana and Steve Young, the two quarterbacks Walsh developed during the 49ers' extended title run, did just that, combining to win five Super Bowl titles. A more recent example is Brady, who had three Super Bowl rings after just five years in the NFL.

There was no better judge and coach of modern quarterbacks than the late Bill Walsh, whose chapter on "The Care and Feeding of Quarterbacks" in his 1990 book, *Building a Champion*, should be required reading for every scout.

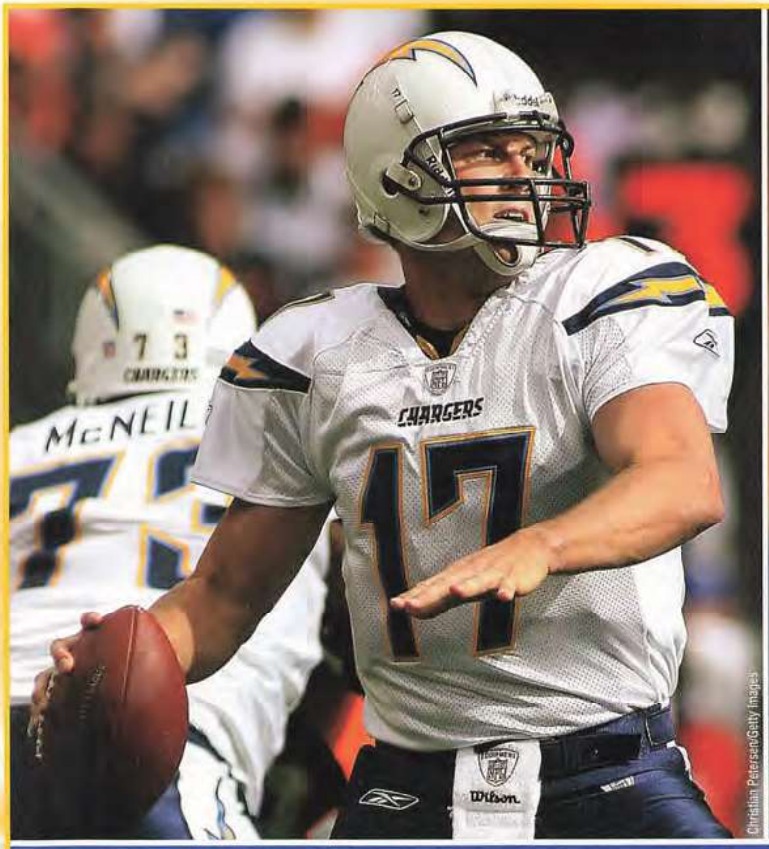
"I look for more in a quarterback than just a strong arm," he wrote.

Walsh listed natural competitive instincts, spontaneity, quick delivery, agility, and athletic intelligence as the key ingredients—all developed by astute coaching, of course. Accuracy is understood, but can be improved as part of mechanical preparation.

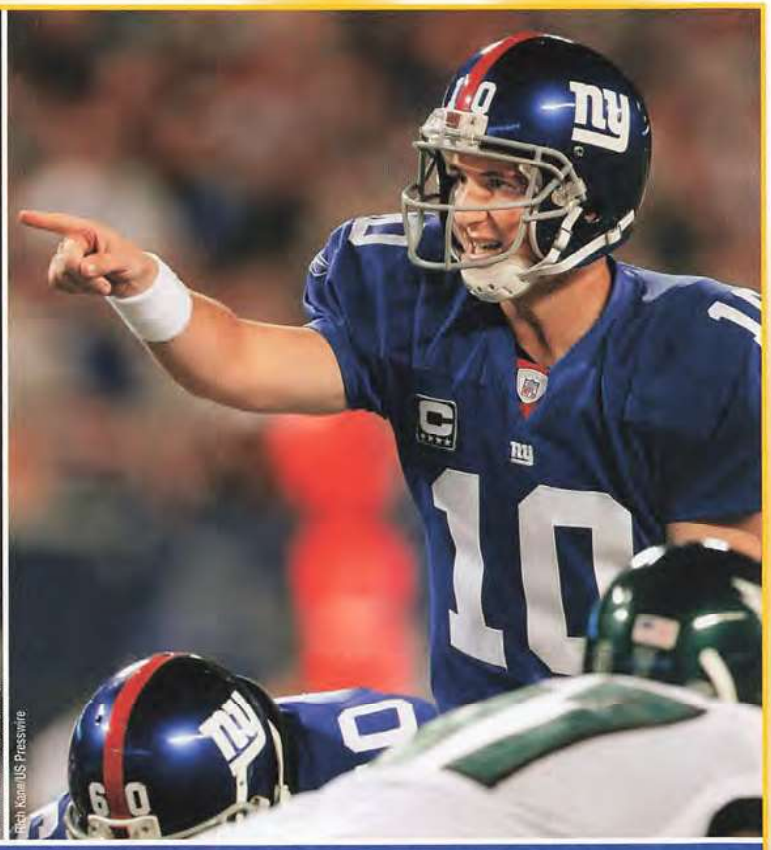
"A high IQ isn't as important as the ability to realize almost instinctively what is occurring on the field," Walsh wrote. "That quality can be observed in all the great quarterbacks.

In Dallas, the undrafted Romo is emerging as the latest quarterback success story. He's seeking to follow Warner's example after beating out a former No. 1 overall pick (Drew Bledsoe) while trying to live up to the legend of a three-time Super Bowl champion (Aikman). Based on the early evidence, he just might be capable of pulling it off.

Romo, who played his college ball at Eastern Illinois, went unclaimed in the 2003 draft while Carson Palmer, Byron Leftwich, Kyle Boller, and Rex Grossman all were first-round choices. But shortly after signing him as a free agent, the Cowboys were convinced they had found a gem. They were right. Pushed into the starter's role early in 2006, Romo earned a Pro Bowl selection by throwing for 2,903 yards and 19 TDs while directing Dallas back into the playoffs for the



Christian Petersen/Getty Images



Rich Kane/IUS Presswire

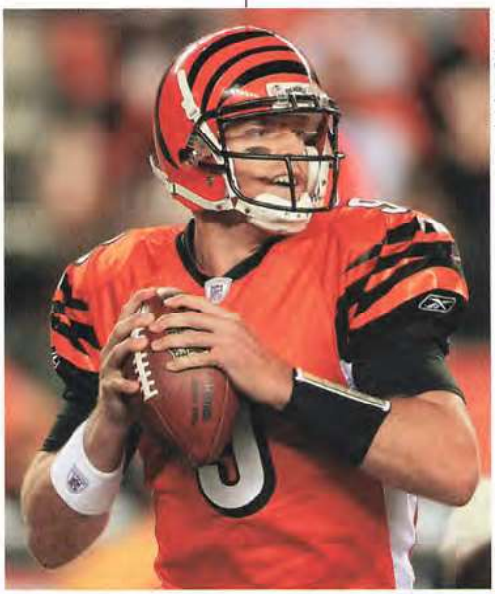
The top two quarterbacks selected in the 2004 draft were the Chargers' Philip Rivers (left) **and the Giants' Eli Manning. Both led their teams to playoff berths this season.**

first time in three seasons. As the full-time starter in 2007, he fired 37 touchdown passes and helped the Cowboys to the NFC East title.

Meanwhile, the talented but oft-injured Leftwich was released by Jacksonville at the start of the 2007 season before signing with Atlanta. And although Chicago's Grossman was behind center for last year's Super Bowl run, both he and the Ravens' Boller have endured uneven careers. Romo's success even adds to the pressure faced by Cincinnati's Palmer, who despite all his statistical prowess still carries the extra load of being a first overall selection.

Romo compares favorably to 2002's top picks as well. With Carr's move to Carolina, all three quarterbacks taken in the first round that year—Joey Harrington and Patrick Ramsey are the others—have left their original teams. Harrington and Ramsey, in fact, were on their third pro team by the start of this season.

This high turnover rate demonstrates that teams need to find quarterbacks as quickly and as often as possible, and then find out if they can play. Even after the Packers traded for Brett Favre in 1992, former general manager Ron Wolf made it a point to look for a quarterback in each draft. His track record speaks volumes—Ty Detmer, Mark Brunell, Aaron Brooks, and Matt Hasselbeck eventually started for other teams. While that was happening, Favre was doing the unthinkable by staying healthy and productive enough to start what is now 254 consecutive regular-season games for Green Bay. If only it were that easy for every team in the league.



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

Carson Palmer, the No. 1 overall pick in 2003, is among eight quarterbacks taken first in the last 10 years.

When it comes down to which first-round QB class will carve out the league's next great legacy, it may evolve into a battle between 2006 and 2004 with Young, Leinart, and Cutler in competition against Eli Manning, Rivers, Roethlisberger, and Buffalo's J.P. Losman. If either group can endure, it will set the standard for future years. Since the famed group of 1983, only one first-round draft class has produced even as many as three long-term starters and that was way back in 1987 (Chris Miller, Jim Harbaugh, and No. 1 overall pick Vinny Testaverde).

Yet there is reason to believe this trend is about to change. The college game is producing more quarterback prospects these days because colleges are gravitating toward pro-style offenses, perhaps a result of coaches going back-and-forth between the two levels. Leinart and Cutler came from sophisticated programs, and Young did a whole lot more than hand off the ball—or run with it himself—at Texas. While all three must still overcome hurdles, they also appear to possess the skills necessary to make the NFL grade.

"Saturdays are looking more and more like Sundays," is the way Chicago Bears general manager Jerry Angelo puts it.

This is good news for the NFL, because quarterbacks are in demand. Always were, always will be.

Don Pierson covered the NFL for 38 years for the Chicago Tribune. *He is a recipient of the Dick McCann Award for long and distinguished pro football reporting, awarded by the Pro Football Hall of Fame.*

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WITH HIS BOUNDLESS ENERGY AND UNDERDOG MENTALITY, MICHAEL BIDWILL IS SETTING THE CARDINALS ON A NEW COURSE.

by Jennifer Allen

Courtesy of Arizona Cardinals

Birdies, bogeys, and especially *eagles* are not part of Michael Bidwill's work vocabulary. But "Cardinals" is. A huge part.

"I don't golf," says the Arizona Cardinals' president. "I gave it up after I joined the team in 1996. I realized if I golfed we wouldn't have a stadium."

Foregoing the country-club lifestyle was barely a sacrifice for the man largely responsible for making University of Phoenix Stadium the Cardinals' home field. A domed stadium was his father's (team chairman and owner Bill Bidwill) vision when he uprooted the franchise from St. Louis in 1988. But for a dozen years the handshake promise given by local authorities to build such a venue remained unmet.

"There were agreements in place and assurances made—and unfortunately they changed," Bill Bidwill explains of the Cardinals' years of stadium discontent.

Until 2006, the Cardinals were tenants in Sun Devil Stadium on the campus of Arizona State University. The 76,000-seat outdoor complex was fine for the flexible start-time scheduling of college football, but it proved to be a huge handicap in the more streamlined NFL.

"It was a failed experiment to play pro football in an open-air facility in the Sonoran Desert," says Michael Bidwill.

With its hot aluminum bleachers, Sun Devil Stadium became known around the league as "The Oven." To avoid the bake of September, the Cardinals spent much of the early season on the road. And at home sellouts were rare, leaving the team with the league's smallest season ticket base. Without their own NFL-quality arena, the Cardinals could not shake the stigma of being "a relocated team," which only impeded their efforts to generate fan interest.

"We didn't have our own home," says Michael Bidwill. "[And] this affected our connection with the community."

Michael Bidwill has not always been so actively involved in team operations. For a time it appeared Bidwill—who earned a finance degree from St. Louis University in 1987 and a law degree from Catholic University in 1990—had chosen a career path far from the family business. For six years, he served as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's office in Phoenix, focusing on crimes that ranged from domestic violence to homicide.

On weekdays, he prosecuted criminals. But on weekends, he sat in the Cardinals coaches' box, charting plays for the offense. During these years, he became increasingly frustrated that the nation's oldest continuously operated pro football franchise never had its own stadium. As the Chicago Cardinals, they shared Comiskey Park with Major League Baseball's White Sox. In St. Louis, they paid rent to baseball's Cardinals for the right to play at Busch Memorial Stadium.

"We date back to 1898," Bidwill explains. "And we had always been a tenant in somebody else's stadium."

While the team struggled to build an identity in Arizona, Bidwill soared in the courtroom. In six years in the U.S. Attorney's office, he won all but three of the cases he brought to trial. Still, he longed for a change and during a weekly lunch with his dad, Michael discussed the next phase of his career. Perhaps he'd go to work in one of the Phoenix law firms offering him a position. Or maybe, just maybe, he'd join the Cardinals and help energize the stagnant stadium project.

His dad listened intently. The lunch ended without a clear decision as to Michael's plans. But a few days later, his father circulated an interoffice memo announcing Michael as the team's new vice president and general counsel (he became the Cardinals' president in 2007).

As it was, Michael was on his way to Green Bay to attend a seminar on sports facilities. During a phone conversation, his father's executive assistant congratulated and then informed Michael of his new position. Without looking back, he stepped out of the courtroom and into the business—and football—world, bringing with him a drive that proved he had been bred for this role all along.

Born in St. Louis in 1964, Michael Bidwill is the second of Bill and Nancy Bidwill's five children. By age 4, he was attending Cardinals' training camp in Lake Forest, Ill. At age 9, he was promoted to ball boy and in his first game was flattened in a collision with a player running out-of-bounds. Michael stood up, quickly recovered, and resumed his duties. For his efforts that day, he was paid nine dollars.

Paul Connors/AP WWP

Will Powers/AP WWP

(Above) **Cardinals owner Bill Bidwill (left) and general manager Rod Graves (right) introduce Ken Whisenhunt as the team's new head coach at a January 2007 press conference.** (Right) **Cardinals president Michael Bidwill points to the construction taking place at what is now University of Phoenix Stadium.**

"The first check came," he recalls. "I was living large with nine bucks a game! I couldn't believe I was getting paid! So I kept it. I saved it. And two years later, I bought a BMX bike."

Many American boys dream of growing up on the sidelines of a pro football team, but being the owner's son also involved realities most kids never have to face.

"I understood at any early age that we were in a different type of business," Michael says. "The business of football is a highly public one—where winning and losing are the only measures of success. Like every player, coach, or front office person, the family feels the pressure to win, and obviously the criticism when you don't.

"We fielded a lot of competitive teams," he notes, pointing to the "Cardiac Cards" of the mid '70s as an example. Led by Jim Hart, Mel Gray, and Dan Dierdorf, the take-it-to-the-wire team won the NFC East in 1974 and 1975, and barely missed a playoff spot in 1976.

AP WWP

With Cardinals head coach Jim Conzelman looking on, this 1942 photo shows (left to right) Charles "Stormy" Bidwill, Jim Conzelman Jr., and Bill Bidwill having some fun during a break at preseason training camp.

Family involvement with the franchise goes back to 1933, when Michael's grandfather, Charles, purchased the then-Chicago Cardinals. Charles Bidwill managed to keep the Cardinals financially afloat through the Depression and World War II, and he built the team that won the 1947 NFL title. But maintaining a winning enterprise proved difficult. In their history, the Cardinals have just six playoff appearances and two playoff wins.

Coaches and players come and go, but when a team struggles so consistently, the responsibility is placed squarely on the ownership. Throughout his childhood, Michael had to listen to those who deemed the Cardinals perennial losers.

"You learn to grow up with a thick skin and be able to handle it at an early age," he explains. "And that's what I did."

As a teenager at Georgetown Prep, that underdog mentality suited him well. In his first season on the boarding school's wrestling team, Bidwill weighed just 165 lbs. but competed in the 189-lb. class. If he didn't, the under-manned team would have had to forfeit matches. Still, Bidwill remained undaunted each time he stepped onto the mat.

"It was competition. It was about taking a shot at it and seeing if I could do it, even if my opponent outweighed me by 25 pounds," he recalls. "You have to go out there and compete and try to win it."

"When Michael set out to do something, it got done," says Bill Bidwill, who became co-owner in 1962 and bought out his brother, Charles Jr., 10 years later. "At an early age he wanted to fly planes, so he set a plan, learned what he had to do, and became a licensed pilot at 19."

Michael now flies his Citation jet to away games, league meetings, and on monthly missions to bring doctors and medical supplies to impoverished towns in Baja California, Mexico.

"He has great drive and doesn't let challenges deter him," adds his dad. "That was evident in the path to getting a new stadium."

Michael now admits he had much to learn, but also a lot to offer, in managing a project that had languished for so long.

"While I'd been in a lot of stadiums, I didn't know much about politics. I didn't know much about legislation. I didn't know much about public finance. And I didn't know much about stadium design or construction contracts or any of those things. But I did have what I felt was a lot of energy to bring to the job, tried to hire some good people, and learn what I needed to know to get it done."

And just as he had as a kid, Bidwill chose to view any doubts about his abilities as a prime motivating factor.

"The criticism has been a motivator for me," he maintains. "It motivates me to make sure we're doing the best job we can—on the field, off the field, and as an organization."

Within seven weeks of joining the Cardinals, Bidwill had assembled an entire new team of consultants and lawyers for the stadium project. He also presented the first piece of stadium legislation to city planners.

"He really got the ball rolling," Bill Bidwill says.

In 2000, after Bidwill had been on the job four years, voters approved $350 million to finance a retractable domed stadium in Glendale. The Bidwills contributed another $150 million toward the project, while remaining funds came from hotel and rental car taxes as well as the NFL Players' Tax. In 2006, when the University of Phoenix paid $154 million for naming rights, it was the third-most lucrative such deal in NFL history.

The stadium was an instant success. Four months before the 2006 season opened, Arizona Cardinals season tickets were sold out. By the start of 2007, more games had been sold out at University of Phoenix Stadium than in the previous 18 years at Sun Devil.

"Credit air conditioning," Michael quips.

And credit Michael Bidwill for the vision, perseverance, and focus to see it all through. Any images of fans attending Cardinals home games wearing opponents' jerseys are now distant memories.

"Come to University of Phoenix Stadium, and [you'll see] the fans are all in 'Cardinal Red,'" he says. "We've got the home-field advantage. And we've got our own home, too."

But don't expect to see Bidwill on a nearby fairway, cruising in a golf cart catching a fine desert breeze. For him, the work is still far from complete. His next goal is to build a Super Bowl-caliber team.

"We want to be a winning team and fill our lobby with Super Bowl trophies," he says. "And as we win games, hopefully we can be viewed as one of the more successful organizations in the NFL."

At that point, perhaps, Michael Bidwill will finally shout out "fore." But even then, it will likely only be a warning call to teams trying to block the Cardinals' path.

Jennifer Allen is the author of two books, including Fifth Quarter: the Scrimmage of a Football Coach's Daughter. *Her articles have appeared in the* New York Times, Rolling Stone, *and* The New Republic. *Allen is currently a reporter on NFL Network's Total Access.*

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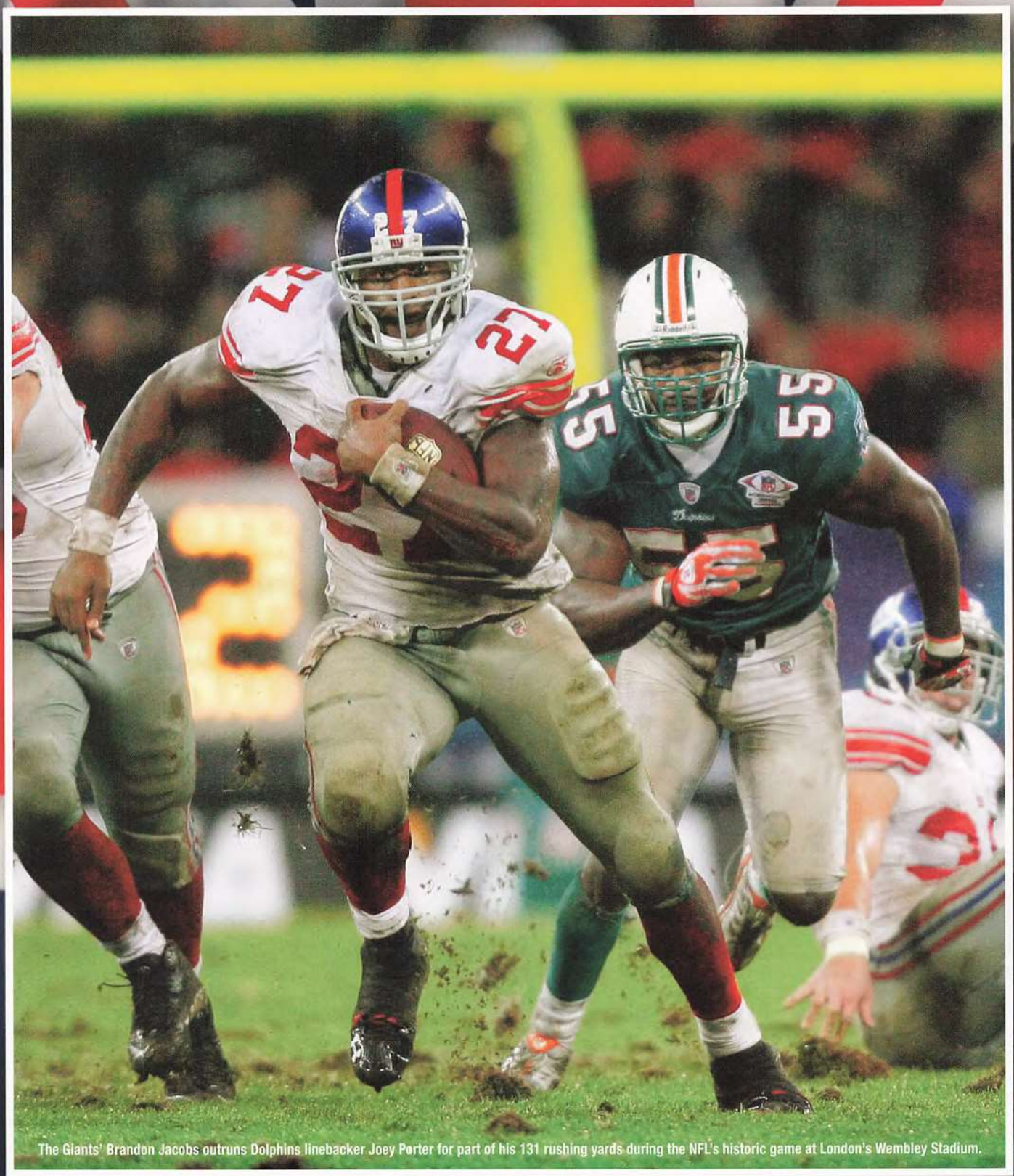
A ROYAL SUCCESS



The Giants' Brandon Jacobs outruns Dolphins linebacker Joey Porter for part of his 131 rushing yards during the NFL's historic game at London's Wembley Stadium.

OCTOBER'S GIANTS-DOLPHINS GAME IN ENGLAND MARKED THE NFL'S FIRST REGULAR-SEASON VENTURE OUTSIDE NORTH AMERICA. A SELL-OUT CROWD GOT A DOSE OF OLD-TIME GRIDIRON GRITTINESS.

by Mike Carlson

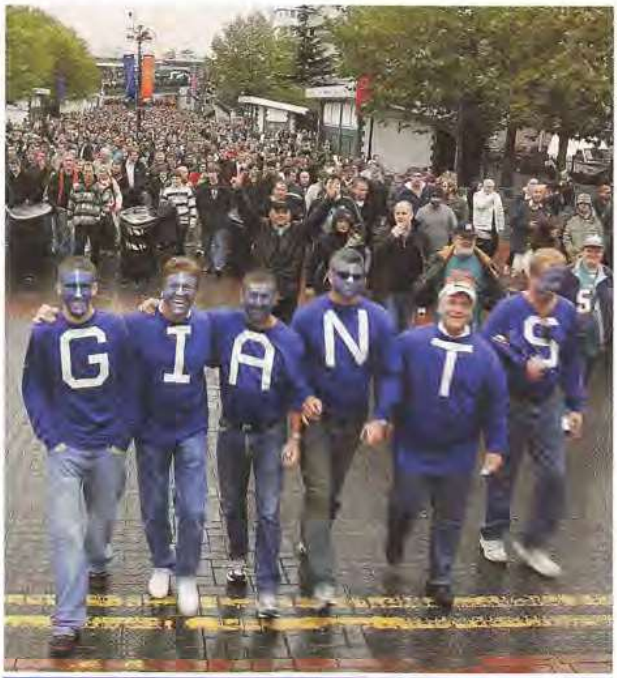
It wasn't like any NFL game you've ever been to. But you wouldn't expect it to be, because there had never been a regular-season NFL game staged outside North America before.

And for most of the 81,176 fans who packed into London's recently rebuilt Wembley Stadium on October 28, it was something new as well. They were attending their first NFL contest. The final result, a 13-10 New York Giants win over the Miami Dolphins, was important for the teams; how the event was embraced by a distant country proved important for the entire league.

The atmosphere was fantastic, if sometimes unfamiliar. Wembley has hosted FA Cup finals (English soccer's Super Bowl), the 1948 Olympics, and England's 1966 World Cup soccer triumph, so big-time sporting events are nothing new to the area. And, as usual, Wembley Way was lined with ticket "touts" (scalpers) and hawkers who were selling soccer-style "supporters' scarves."

More out of the ordinary were the vans dispensing oddly-scented gray matter called "burr-guhs." And since no parking lots exist near the stadium, the NFL brought the tradition of tailgating to Wembley's adjoining arena.

For the majority of fans, who were overwhelmingly British, it was also an opportunity to endure some local traditions: a "tube" (subway) breakdown on the way to the stadium, and, of course, rain once they got there. Still, the thousands mingling outside the stadium hours before kickoff were having the time of their lives.



Thomas E. White/Getty Images

Giants fans show their colors along Wembley Way before the game.

They came dressed in replica jerseys that represented virtually every NFL team, as well as some from NFL Europe and even British amateur teams. "Football's rainbow coalition," was how NFLUK managing director Alastair Kirkwood described it. Once inside the stadium, their enthusiasm made it feel like the unique moment in history that it was.

"It was somewhere between an NFL [regular-season] game and the Super Bowl," says Ian Allen, the one-time Giants lineman who worked the game for Britain's Sky Sports.

At first, the crowd backed the Dolphins, the nominal home team and, at 0-7, the definite underdogs. But it became apparent that they were really cheering for football, and soon every good play—offensive or defensive—generated applause.

Not that there were many big plays. The persistent sheeting of fine, misty rain left the turf—mowed short for soccer—slippery and easily cut up, while the balls turned slick almost instantly. Wembley's roof protects only the spectators, not the field, so the teams were forced into classic "old school" football.

But criticism of the conditions got overblown. When an American reporter suggested to Jason Taylor that it was hardly a typical NFL performance, the Dolphins defensive end snapped back, "It was a typical NFL game in the rain. It could've been Green Bay."

The conditions suited the Giants' 265-pound running back Brandon Jacobs, who produced a then career-best 131 yards rushing. Quarterback Eli Manning scrambled 10 yards for a touchdown and Lawrence Tynes kicked two field goals as New York built a 13-0 halftime lead. Playing tough defense, the Giants remained in front, 13-3, at the two-minute warning, but Cleo Lemon overcame the elements long enough to hit Ted Ginn Jr. with a 21-yard bullet to bring Miami within three. That set up an onside kick and potential drama.

When the kick slid out of bounds, the Giants gained possession and took three knees, producing the first boos since Chelsea soccer player John Terry was introduced before the coin toss. The crowd was continuing a soccer tradition of whistling if the team leading begins stalling at the end of the game. Football is, after all, the only sport where a game can end by "taking a knee."

While some in the British media wondered aloud whether England's Premier League soccer would send two of its top teams to New York for a regular-season game—essentially taking the national sport into someone else's backyard—they couldn't deny the success.

Both teams overcame the logistical problems of travel, increased press attention, and an unusual practice schedule. It was a business trip, not a vacation, but as Giants defensive lineman (and London-born) Osi Umenyiora put it, "This was something special." One member of the Giants, defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo, had actually been at the old Wembley before, in 1992 as a coach with the Barcelona Dragons for a World League game against the London Monarchs.

"I never imagined then that we'd be playing an NFL game [here] in a new stadium like this," he admits. "But you never know what will happen. I wouldn't imagine I'd be coaching with the Giants, either."

Joel Auerbach/US Presswire

Richard Heathcote/Getty Images

MJ Kim/Getty Images

(Above) **Ted Ginn Jr. catches a Miami TD against Giants defender Michael Johnson.** (Right) **London mayor Ken Livingstone (left) and actor Christian Slater pose in front of a Jason Taylor "robot" at Trafalgar Square.**

Spagnuolo is a reminder of the NFL's long history in London. So coming off 2005's huge success in Mexico—when the Cardinals and 49ers played a regular-season game in front of more than 100,000 fans—the city was the logical choice as the next step in bringing the sport to the world. A half-million people registered with the NFL's UK website for the opportunity to purchase tickets, meaning the game could have sold out four times over.

American football's toehold in Britain dates back a quarter-century, and last year's Super Bowl attracted two million viewers in the early hours of the morning.

The NFL debuted on British television in 1982, on the then-new Channel Four. Shown late on Sunday afternoons—traditionally a time when British audiences were nodding off after Sunday lunch to programs like *Antique Roadshow* or *Songs of Praise*—the impact of a tightly edited package of slam-bang action was immense. This came at a time when British soccer was mired in the doldrums, its tone set by hooligans and its television coverage perfunctory, as soccer feared live broadcasts would destroy attendance.

In 1983, the Vikings and Cardinals played a well-received exhibition game at Wembley. Within three years, the Super Bowl was drawing a huge British television audience, and in 1986 the Super Bowl champion Chicago Bears (featuring Walter Payton and William "the Refrigerator" Perry) sold out Wembley for the preseason American Bowl against Dallas. Bears coach Mike Ditka gave his stars some playing time, the Fridge scored a touchdown, and everyone went home happy.

Before long, Frank Gifford was hosting a highlights program and Don Shula became an analyst for the country's Super Bowl broadcasts. In one sense, the game was at its overseas peak.

What happened next was inevitable. As the NFL's regular-season received more and more live coverage, each American Bowl was given less and less attention. At the same time, British soccer began copying the NFL's model for both television (more live games, more close-up coverage) and matches (better facilities and more fan-friendly game days).

By the time the NFL launched the World League of American Football in 1991 (later to become NFL Europe), the gridiron wave had crested. The London-based Monarchs still drew 61,000 to Wembley when they won the first World Bowl, but after the 1992 season the league suspended play for two years. When it returned in 1995, all six teams were on the continent's mainland. The circuit played 13 more seasons and developed fans and scores of NFL players, including five members of this year's Dolphins (Lemon and Keith Traylor among them), before closing down last spring after a fabulous World Bowl sellout in Frankfurt.

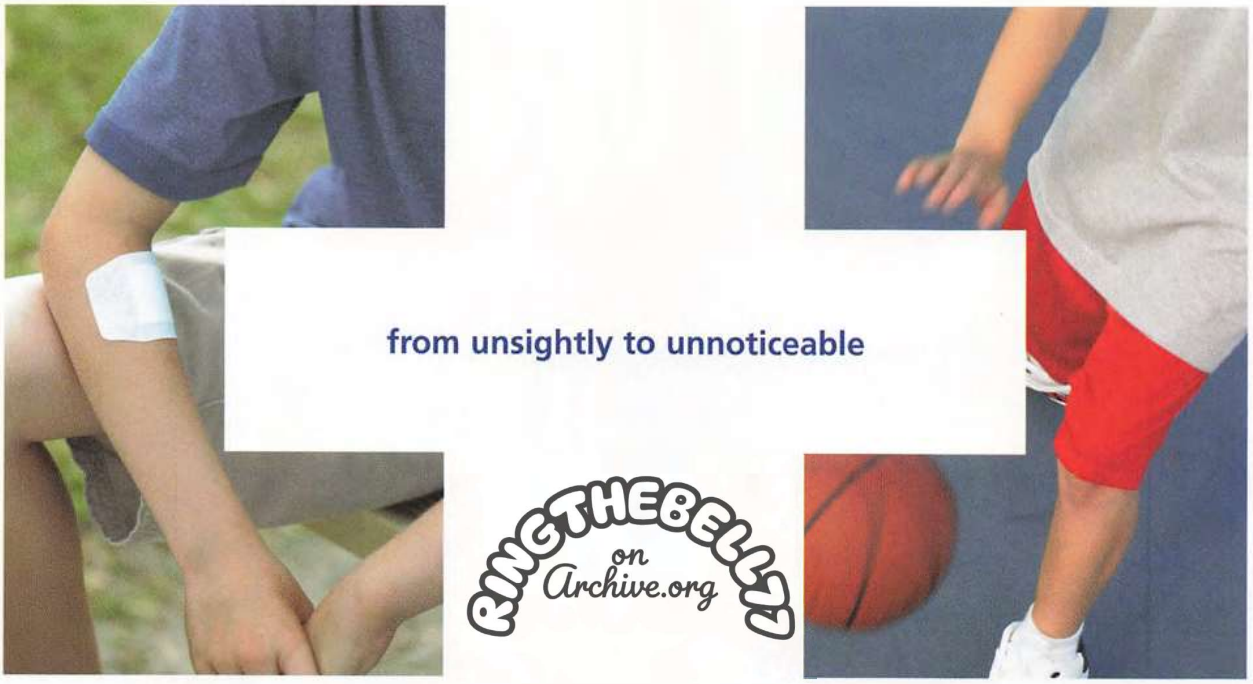
While successful on the developmental front, NFL Europe proved less capable of sustaining itself. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell's vision is instead to market the league's most attractive product: real NFL games, generating far more exposure. It worked in Mexico, and in Britain the excitement generated by the Giants-Dolphins game has persuaded the august BBC to televise the Super Bowl live for the first time.

Goodell knows that American football faces a difficult hurdle in replacing long-loved sports in the hearts of people overseas, but it's a surprisingly easy sell as a package of amazing athletic entertainment and live spectacle.

The world is shrinking, and the immediacy of football is its selling point. The real test may come next fall, if the NFL returns to Britain or extends its European venture to another country (most likely Germany). China is another market waiting to be tapped. It's all part of a long-term strategy to have every team play one game outside the United States each year, whether in Mexico, Canada, Europe, or Asia.

If the sporting world does turn oval, in the shape of an American football, British fans will remember that it all started at Wembley Stadium—in the rain.

Mike Carlson presents NFL coverage for Britain's Channel Five and the Super Bowl for the BBC. He writes a column for NFLUK.com, and covered the WLAF/NFL Europe for Pro Football Weekly, *NFL.com, Screensport, Sky Sports, the* Guardian, *and the* International Herald Tribune.



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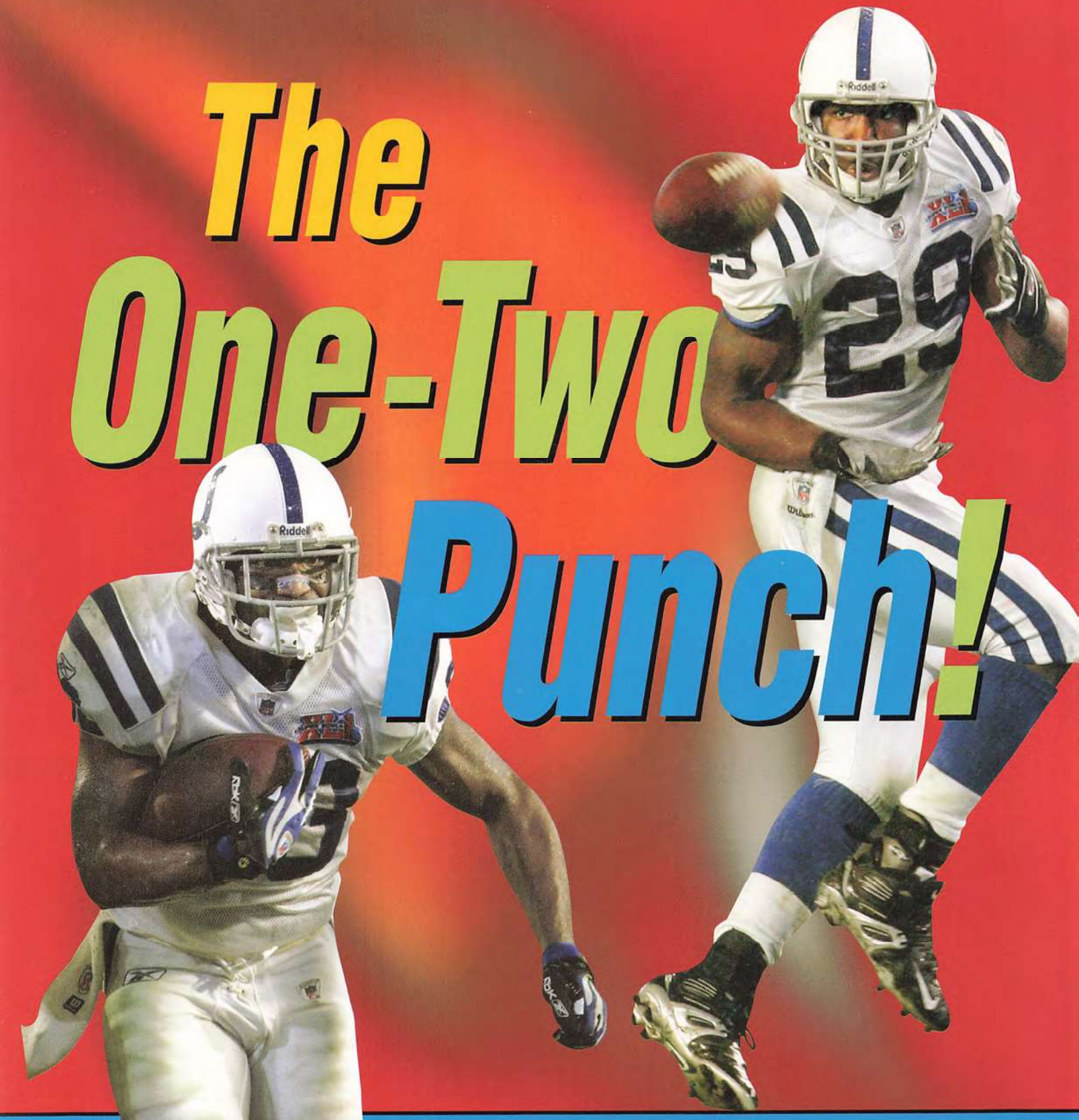


In the NFL, backfield depth is essential for success. The Colts proved that again in Super Bowl XLI.

by Clark Judge

There's a lesson to be learned from Super Bowl XLI, but it has nothing to do with Tony Dungy and Peyton Manning winning their first Super Bowl together and everything to do with Joseph Addai and Dominic Rhodes winning theirs.

Addai and Rhodes were the Colts' top two running backs, and either could have been named the game's Most Valuable Player. Addai starred in the first half; Rhodes took over after intermission. Both excelled when they were called upon, which is where our lesson begins.

"You can never have enough running backs," is a favorite saying of former NFL head coach Marty Schottenheimer.

And the Colts proved it. Again.

They juggled Addai and Rhodes throughout the 2006 season, just as Dallas (Marion Barber and Julius Jones) and Jacksonville (Fred Taylor and Maurice Jones-Drew) successfully alternated their backs this year. Call it a trend, but it's more a necessity. Coaches know they'll go nowhere without a running game, so they do what they can to establish, protect, and nurture one for 16 games and—if all works out—the postseason.

For Indianapolis, the final payoff came at Super Bowl XLI in South Florida, where Rhodes piled up 113 rushing yards and scored a touchdown, while Addai added 77 yards on the ground and caught 10 passes (for another 66 yards) out of the backfield.

But forget the Colts for a moment. Look at their opponent that day, the Chicago Bears. They alternated Cedric Benson and Thomas Jones all season. As a matter of fact, all four of last season's conference championship game participants had one thing in common, and it was their running backs. Each rotated two.

Which proves it's no longer enough to find two good quarterbacks. Now two good running backs are just as important. That's why San Diego has Michael Turner penciled in behind LaDainian Tomlinson. It's why the Patriots signed Sammy Morris to complement Laurence Maroney. It's why Derrick Ward was able to step in for an injured Brandon Jacobs in New York and carry the Giants early this season. And it's why Indianapolis had no trouble calling on backup Kenton Keith when Addai bowed out of an October start against Tampa Bay (Rhodes, a free agent after last season, had moved on to Oakland).

"What you want to do," says Colts president Bill Polian, "is have that first guy fresh for December and January.

"I remember last year when Tony said to me, 'I don't want a repeat of what happened with Edgerrin [James in 2005].' We got to December and January, and his legs were dead because he took every carry."

As we know now, the Colts' revised strategy worked perfectly. But their tact wasn't new. It's been going on for years, only now it's more in vogue than a decade or so ago when Barry Sanders, Emmitt Smith, Eric Dickerson, Ricky Watters, and Marcus Allen were going wire-to-wire for their teams with almost no relief.

And there's certainly enough Super Bowl history to back up the two-back approach. The Jets had Matt Snell and Emerson Boozer in Super Bowl III; the Super Bowl VI champion Cowboys paired Duane Thomas and Walt Garrison. There was the Jim Kiick-Larry Csonka-Mercury Morris triumvirate for the undefeated Dolphins, and the Franco Harris-Rocky Bleier duo for those dominant Steelers teams. When the Raiders won Super Bowl XI, they came at teams with Clarence Davis, Mark Van Eeghen, and Pete Banaszak. The first time the 49ers won the Super Bowl they had Earl Cooper and Ricky Patton; the second time, they featured Wendell Tyler and Roger Craig.

More recently, there's been the Dorsey Levens-Edgar Bennett pairing for the Super Bowl XXXI champion Packers, Mike Alstott and Michael Pittman for the Buccaneers in Super Bowl XXXVII, and Jerome Bettis and Willie Parker divvying up the carries for the Steelers' Super Bowl title team of two years ago.

"I think it's a necessity," says Bills head coach Dick Jauron, "because the game gets more and more physical every year, and with the types of things you're seeing from defenses, it requires protection for your running backs."

That fact was proven again this year in New Orleans, where the Saints lost the services of Deuce McAllister to torn knee ligaments after just three games. The club was supposed to wilt, except that it had Reggie Bush, Aaron Stecker, and Pierre Thomas to call upon—and their combined efforts kept the team in the NFC playoff hunt until the final weekend.

But backfield depth was part of New Orleans' thinking when it selected Bush in the first round of the 2006 draft. The Saints already had McAllister but could not pass on Bush's talent—especially at the position he played. Yes, Bush was arguably the most talented player in the draft, but the Saints also were gaining an insurance policy against an injury to

Getty Images

While most people remember Joe Namath's boasts, running backs *Emerson Boozer (32)* and *Matt Snell (41)* were key to the Jets team that beat the Colts in Super Bowl III. Snell rushed for 121 yards and a TD in the win.

(Opposite page) ***Joseph Addai (29)* and *Dominic Rhodes (33)* provided twice the trouble for the Bears in last year's Super Bowl, combining for 190 rushing yards and 11 receptions in Indianapolis' 29-17 victory.**

Left: Dominic Rhodes (Michael Zagaris/Getty Images; Right: Joseph Addai (Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images)

McAllister. Their logic? Two backs are better than one, and when McAllister was healthy, they occasionally teamed him with Bush. In 2006, the duo combined for more than 1,600 rushing yards and 118 receptions as New Orleans made the NFC Championship Game.

"If you're a good coach," says Redskins assistant head coach Al Saunders, "you utilize the talent you have. That means you don't want a good player not involved in the game. If you have two good running backs, they have to be involved in some fashion."

Saunders is an expert on the subject. He ran the Kansas City offense when the Chiefs lost Priest Holmes midway through the 2005 season. No problem. Saunders inserted Larry Johnson, pointed him toward the end zone, and saw him gain 1,351 yards in nine games, including a pair of 200-yard efforts.

"You're really talking about wear and tear," says Jauron. "If you think you're going places, you better not wear your starter down. The goal, remember, is to get to the playoffs. And when you get there, that's your shot, and you don't get many."

Fast forward to Kansas City one year later. This time there was no Holmes, so the Chiefs called on Johnson to shoulder the entire load. He responded with a Herculean effort, carrying the ball an NFL-record 416 times and gaining a franchise-best 1,789 yards. But it exacted a toll, and Johnson was spent by January. In the Chiefs' Wild Card playoff loss to the Colts, he managed only 32 yards—with no run longer than five yards.

"That's what happens," says Eagles head coach Andy Reid, who carefully monitors the workload of prize back Brian Westbrook each year. "Guys just get worn out. For the longevity of the player and for maximum performance, it doesn't hurt to give them roles and put them in situations you think they're the best at."

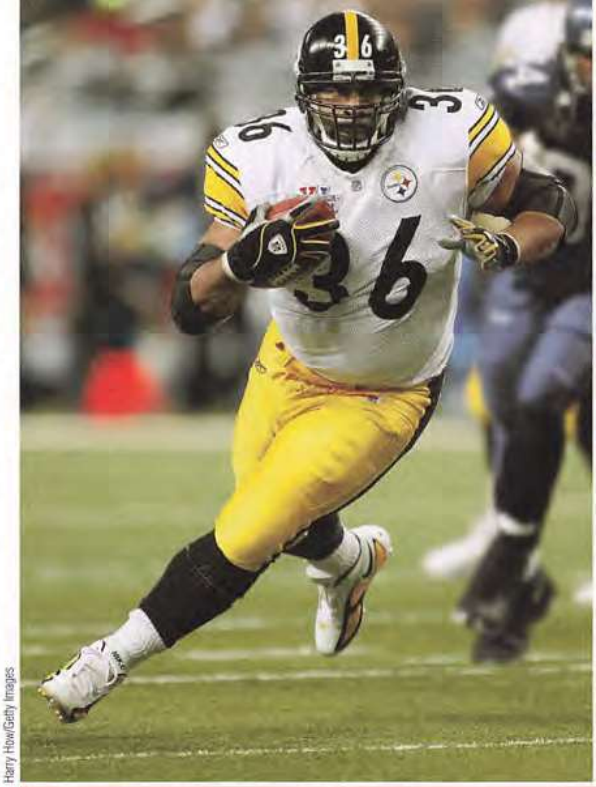
Schottenheimer never needed a reminder. Throughout his 21 seasons as a head coach, he almost always had a second back he trusted. In San Diego, he had Tomlinson—"the best back I've ever seen"—but used Turner regularly. In Kansas City, he teamed Christian Okoye with Barry Word. But the best example may be Cleveland, where he alternated Kevin Mack and Earnest Byner, who each gained 1,000 yards rushing in 1985 when the Browns won the AFC Central.

"You're always going to have one guy who gets the work," says Jauron, "but you've got to have relief for him because he can't take that pounding and still be able to function at the end of the year. If you're good enough to make it to the playoffs, you want your guy to carry the load then."

So while having two solid backs makes sense, it's not always possible in pro football's salary-cap era. Look what happened to St. Louis this season when a spate of injuries robbed the Rams of key players, including star back Steven Jackson for four games. Their ground game floundered, they went winless in his absence, and they never recovered.

"Marty Schottenheimer is right," Saunders says. "You can never have enough running backs. We have Clinton [Portis], Ladell [Betts], and Rock Cartwright, all three-dimensional guys. They can run the ball, they can catch, and they can block.

"They have different qualities and different levels of ability, but if the starter comes out—if he misses a game or even a half—you can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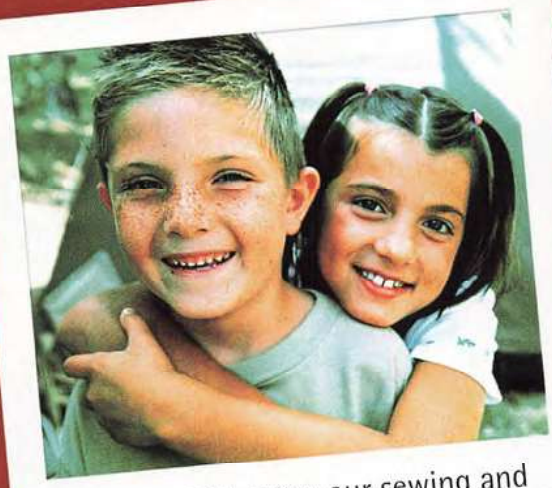
(Above) ***Jerome Bettis (36)*** **and** ***Willie Parker (39)*** **were equally vital to the Steelers' march to Super Bowl XL. Parker's 75-yard touchdown run in their win over Seattle is the longest in Super Bowl history.** (Below) ***Jim Kiick (21)***, ***Larry Csonka (39)***, **and** ***Mercury Morris (22)*** **ignited the undefeated '72 Dolphins' ground attack.**

Tony Tomsic/US Presswire



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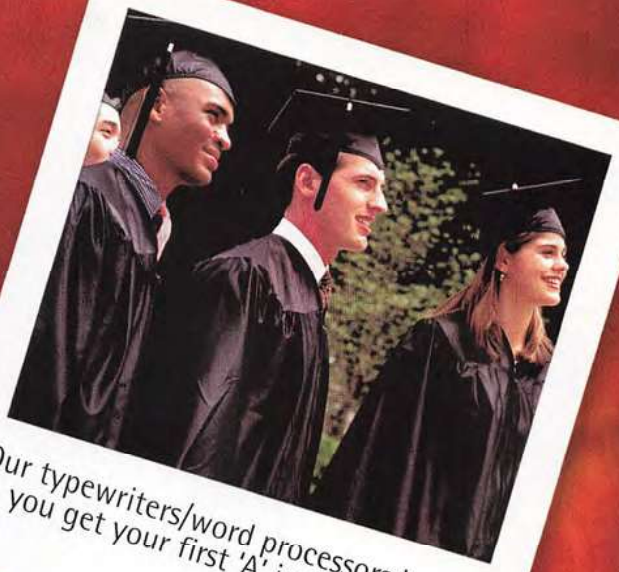

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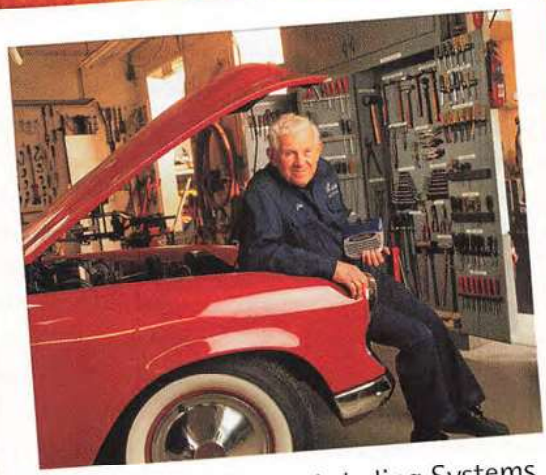

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Marion Barber (left) **and** ***Julius Jones*** **ranked among the NFL's top backfield tandems in 2007. Their combined efforts resulted in more than 1,500 rushing yards and a dozen touchdowns as the Cowboys captured their first NFC East crown in nine years.**

plug the next guy in and not miss a beat. The only difficulty with two backs is that they share time during practice, so they're only getting half better. So, for the most part, you always want to have a featured starting back."

The question, of course, is: How much do you lean on him? The sentiments of Polian and Jauron are echoed throughout the league, with coaches and general managers nearly unanimous in their support of a go-to back only if he can be kept fresh for the postseason.

It may mean curtailing a running back's carries, with some coaches as vigilant as baseball managers tracking pitch counts. In the year the Ravens won Super Bowl XXXV, head coach Brian Billick paid special attention to running back Jamal Lewis. He wanted Lewis rested and ready for the playoffs, which meant he didn't want him called on 30 times a game.

"One of the biggest things we had to do," says Billick, "was to limit [Jamal's] touches. We knew if he was well over the 350-carry mark, then we were going to have some tough sledding. So we tried to balance that."

Lewis wound up with 309 attempts, and the Ravens wound up winning the Super Bowl. In that 34-7 victory over the Giants, he rushed for 102 yards and scored a touchdown.

"There are very few teams," says Billick, "that have a back who is so much better that you say, 'I have to have this guy every snap.'"

San Diego could be considered one of those teams. While the Chargers boast two backs with the talent to start anywhere in the league, they have one, Tomlinson, who is the best in the business. Consequently, he gets almost all of the carries—averaging nearly 340 over the past seven seasons.

"When people start talking about having two backs," says San Diego general manager A.J. Smith, "I ask them, 'What are you [looking for]? A change-of-pace guy who can give your starter a blow? Or a big back who can close a game?' Because if you're telling me you're going to use two backs the same way, then you're telling me you don't have one."

That's the exception. The rule is to try to stock your team with running backs and hope for the best. And the best is to have them fresh for the playoffs by reducing their carries. Fresh legs produce fresh results, which the Colts reminded us last February.

"Unless you have a LaDainian Tomlinson or a Larry Johnson," says Vikings head coach Brad Childress, "I don't see the downside of having two guys just from the standpoint that there's a change-up.

"Those linebackers get their cleats screwed in, and then an Adrian Peterson [the team's rookie back who paired with Chester Taylor to give Minnesota the league's top ground game in 2007] comes in and it's 'whoosh, whoosh.'

"It's a different speed. There's a recalibration. And I don't see anything wrong with it. Not to mention the freshness and lack of wear and tear."

Not to mention it? Quite to the contrary, freshness and lack of wear and tear are what it's all about.

Clark Judge is a senior writer for cbssports.com. He has been covering the NFL for the past 25 years.

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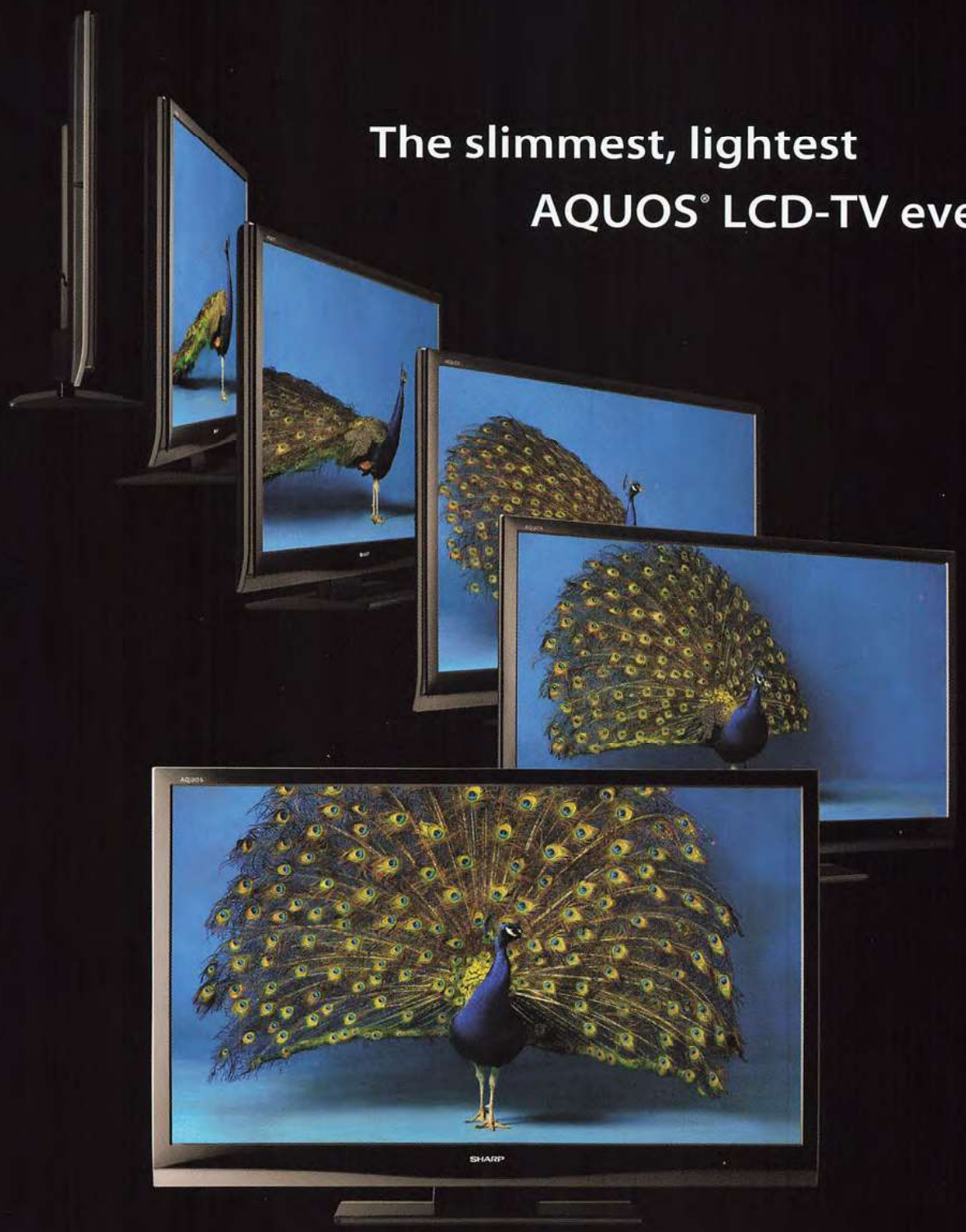

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LAYING IT ON THE LINE

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE LINES MAY NOT GET THE GLORY, BUT THEY REMAIN THE GUTS OF EVERY SUPER BOWL CHAMPION.

by Craig Ellenport

Kevin C. Cox/Wireimage/Getty Images

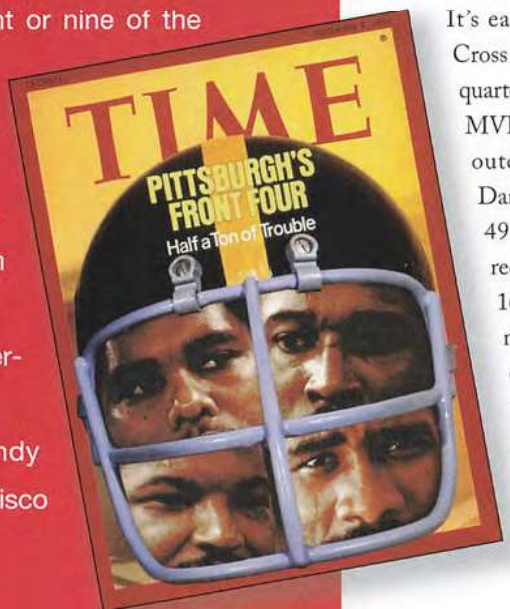
The Colts' Jeff Saturday came up big in Super Bowl XLI.

For any given play of an NFL game, eight or nine of the 22 players on the field are linemen. That's between 36 and 40 percent of the lineup.

Yet in the first 41 years of the Super Bowl, only three defensive linemen have been named the game's Most Valuable Player...and two of them had to share the honor.

Of course, that's three more than their counterparts on the offensive side of the ball.

"Yeah, that's a pretty short list," quips Randy Cross, starting center on three of the San Francisco 49ers' five Super Bowl-winning squads.



It's easy for players such as Randy Cross to be overlooked. Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana was named MVP of Super Bowl XIX, famously outdueling fellow Hall of Famer Dan Marino. But did you know the 49ers still hold the Super Bowl record they set in that game with 16 rushing first downs? You could make a case that the offensive line collectively was the MVP of that win, grinding it out and eating time off the clock—keeping the ball out of Marino's hands.

And guess what? The 49ers banged out 14 more rushing

US Presswire

San Francisco QB Joe Montana (left) is a Super Bowl legend, but center Randy Cross deserves some credit, too.

Lennox McLendon/AP WWP

Richard Dent sacks the Patriots' Steve Grogan as part of his MVP effort for the Bears in Super Bowl XX.

first downs in their Super Bowl XXIV victory over the John Elway-led Broncos. Of course, Montana once again was voted MVP.

"You rarely get an offensive lineman recognized that way," says former Bears defensive end Richard Dent, who is among those select defensive linemen to be named MVP, an honor he earned after spearheading his team's defensive annihilation of the Patriots in Super Bowl XX. "Look at what the Colts' offensive line did in last year's Super Bowl. The MVP award went to the quarterback, but it was the running game that really made the difference."

Indeed, backs Joseph Addai and Dominic Rhodes both had big games, combining for 190 rushing yards. The line's pass protection was pretty good, too. Peyton Manning threw 38 times against the Bears' ferocious defense and was sacked just once.

Manning ended up being MVP, though the honor could have easily gone to Addai, who had 143 combined yards from scrimmage. But Phil Simms and Jim Nantz, calling the game for CBS, did at least mention the possibility of the Colts' offensive line—a group led by All-Pros Jeff Saturday (at center) and Tarik Glenn (left tackle)—sharing the Pete Rozelle Trophy.

"That was probably one of the few times it's ever been mentioned," says Cross, "and it was only mentioned in passing, laughingly, by the broadcasters because they knew it was not going to happen."

As Simms recalls, it was more a matter of calling attention to the Colts' offensive line—because when an offense is loaded with all-pros at the skill positions, it only stands to reason that the line must be doing a good job.

"You could have made a case for the Colts' offensive line to be MVP," says Simms. "And they might have deserved it, but you couldn't get anybody to think like that. To give it to the offensive line as a unit? I've talked about it during games, but you'd have an outcry."

When the Bears demolished New England, 46-10, it was impossible to overlook Chicago's defense, and Dent was the obvious choice with 1.5 sacks and two forced fumbles. Overall, Chicago limited the Patriots to a lowly seven rushing yards, by far a Super Bowl record. But in that game, New England trailed by 20 at halftime and by 41 after three quarters, so the ground game had pretty much been abandoned by the second half.

Perhaps more impressive was the previous record, set in Super Bowl IX by Pittsburgh's Steel Curtain defense. Led up front by Joe Greene and L.C. Greenwood, the Steelers held running back Chuck Foreman and the Minnesota Vikings to 17 yards rushing in a much closer contest. In that 16-6 victory, Pittsburgh also set the Super Bowl record for fewest yards allowed from scrimmage (112) and even netted the first safety in the game's history when Dwight White tackled Fran Tarkenton in the end zone. So, naturally, the MVP was running back Franco Harris (though Pittsburgh's defensive front did eventually make the cover of *Time* magazine).

Super Bowl XI might have provided the ultimate disrespect to the guys on the line. The Vikings were once again the victims, this time being dominated by an opponent's offensive front. Led by Hall of Fame linemen Art Shell and Gene Upshaw, the Oakland Raiders set a then-Super Bowl record with 266 rushing yards in their 32-14 triumph. Six different backs carried the ball for Oakland and three of them had at least one carry of 10 or more yards. Clearly, the offensive line was the key to this victory. So who was named MVP?

Receiver Fred Biletnikoff, who caught four passes for 79 yards and *zero* touchdowns.

"It wasn't a surprise," says Shell. "It was going to be him or the quarterback. That's the nature of the game. Who else wins it?"

Shell says this with a light-hearted chuckle, adding that the idea of him and his linemates

Bettmann/Corbis/Getty Images

NFL/Wirelmage/Getty Images

Washington fans went hog wild over offensive linemen Joe Jacoby (left) and Russ Grimm during the 1980s.

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Defensive linemen Randy White (left) and Harvey Martin shared MVP honors in Dallas' Super Bowl XII victory.

earning Most Valuable Player honors never occurred to him…at least at the time.

"Based on what I've heard over the years," he says, "Gene and I got a lot of votes. I don't know how many, but I've heard that. And I thought, 'You've got to be kidding me.'"

One year later, linemen finally got some extra credit. In the Cowboys' 27-10 win over Denver in Super Bowl XII, the defense forced a then-record eight turnovers, sacked Broncos quarterback Craig Morton four times, and held Denver to a meager 35 yards passing. While anyone on that side of the ball could have been chosen the MVP, the award went to two of the principals: defensive end Harvey Martin and defensive tackle Randy White.

Dent would later join Martin and White on the MVP podium, but offensive linemen are still waiting to get their due. A big part of the problem, of course, is that they don't have any statistics to hang their helmets on.

"There's always something quantifiable to define a great defensive lineman," says Cross. "Guys like Richard [Dent] and Randy White and Dan Hampton; you can go on down the list of all the great linemen through the years. You can look at tackles for loss and sacks and things like that. [But] there's nothing quantifiable for offensive linemen in the way of numbers that people can define."

And in the case of the 49ers, there were so many offensive numbers that could quantify what was being done by the likes of Montana, Roger Craig, Jerry Rice, and others. It's not as if offensive linemen never get any credit; it just so happened that San Francisco's offensive line was often overshadowed.

"We were the 'other' line when we played Cincinnati [in Super Bowl XVI], because they had a future Hall of Famer in Anthony Muñoz anchoring a great offensive line," says Cross. "In our second Super Bowl, we faced Dan Marino and this state-of-the-art offense. Then we faced Muñoz and the Bengals again in Super Bowl XXIII. So we were sort of the other group. But when we think about it, we look back glowingly.

"And you can look at some of the other teams from that era…the Bears had a pretty good offensive line blocking for Walter Payton. Then there were those Chargers' offenses—Air Coryell—and the Giants' offense when they won the Super Bowl and had those great years.

"For some reason, I guess there weren't any really good linemen on any of those lines," adds Cross tongue-in-cheek, "because not many of them are remembered terribly fondly.

"When you get to the Super Bowl and you're in that atmosphere, and people suddenly decide they've got to write about you, they sort of do it grudgingly. But that's OK. That's part of your lot as an offensive lineman."

Dent, who faced the 49ers' offensive line several times in NFC playoff games during the '80s, never underrated that group.

"When you think back to all those Super Bowls San Francisco won, people would say, 'Oh it's the system.' But they ran traps well, they ran fake traps well, they ran draws well. It was quick snaps and timing."

Cross and Dent played in the era that some believe best defined the importance of talented linemen. Teams from the NFC dominated the Super Bowl back then, and it had a lot to do with toughness up front.

"The physical dominance of that decade was highlighted by the guys on the line," says Cross, who also points out the 49ers had a pretty strong defense that was sometimes overlooked because of the offense's ability to score.

Similarly, when one brings up the "Hogs"—Washington's great offensive line that helped them to Super Bowl victories in 1982, '87 and '91—both Dent and Cross quickly mention the presence of Dexter Manley and Charles Mann on the Redskins' defensive side.

"Once you get into the red zone, you've got to be able to run the ball," says Cross. "AFC teams [back then] could throw the ball all over the place, but once the field got short—if your offensive line couldn't pick up the short yards or your defensive line couldn't stop them—it was pretty much over."

So which side of the line is more important when it comes to the Super Bowl?

"That depends on whether you want your offense on the field or your defense on the field," answers Dent.

Says Cross: "The reality is that if you don't have it on both sides, I don't know if you have much of a chance. There haven't been too many one-sided teams winning championships."

"The game really can't be played without the guys up front," adds Dent, quick to give equal billing to both sides of the line. "Without them, it would just be a passing scrimmage."

Craig Ellenport is senior editor at NFL.com and NFL Publishing.

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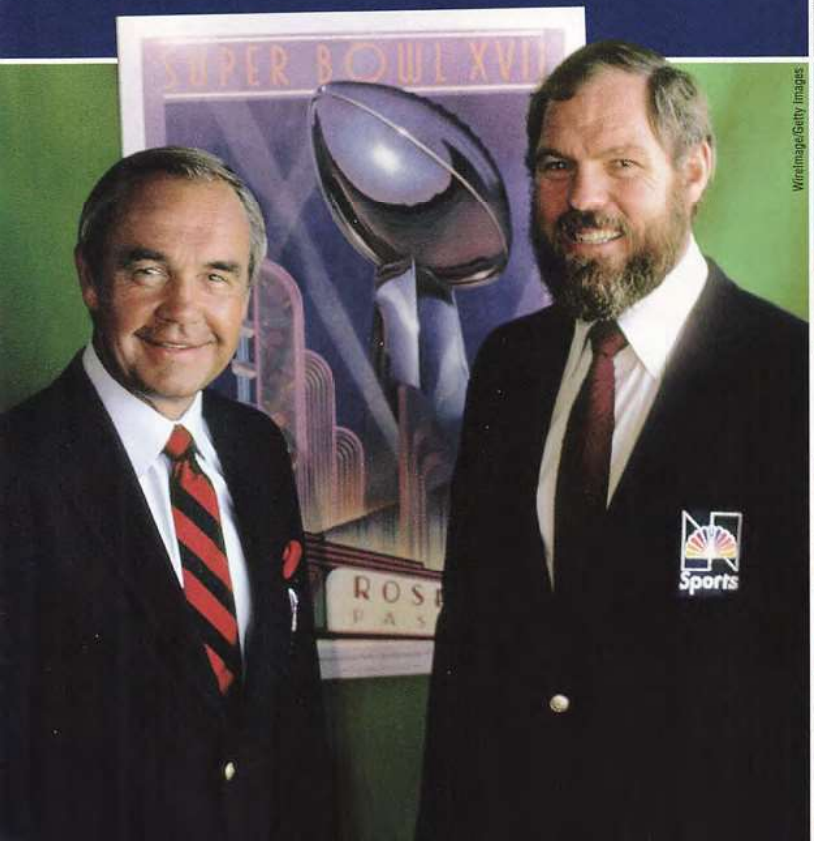
Voices of the Game

WHETHER BEHIND THE SCENES OR THERE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO SEE AND HEAR, SUPER BOWL ANNOUNCERS SPIN SOME OF THE GAME'S BEST STORIES.

by Leonard Shapiro

Frank Micelotta/Getty Images



WireImage/Getty Images

Ron Heflin/AP WWP

Before every game he's assigned to cover, FOX play-by-play man Joe Buck prepares an information board—a television crib sheet you might say—with easily accessible statistics, starting lineups, and the names and numbers for every player on both teams. Buck also scrawls in a few salient points he wants to mention and a key word or two to remind him of an anecdote he may want to recall over the course of the three-and-a-half hour telecast.

His game board for the first Super Bowl he ever handled for FOX—the Patriots-Eagles game in Jacksonville—now occupies a place of honor in the basement of his St. Louis home. Guests often ask to see mementoes from his career, and that game board unfailingly catches their eye because of the messages Buck wrote to himself at the top of each corner.

"RELAX!!!!," it reads on one side, in big, bold capital letters. And on the other side? Two words he couldn't use on national television without an FCC reprimand. Those words—whose rough translation would be "the heck with it"—were meant to remind him that after all was said and done, it was still only a football game, one of hundreds of sports telecasts he's handled with great aplomb over many years, and all the more reason to take a "What, me worry?" attitude toward a game that attracts the largest television audience of the year.

"For that first one," recalls Buck, the lead announcer for FOX's Super Bowl coverage again this year, "I remember a lot of build-up and a lot of hype. But when the light went off, we just did the game, just like we always did the game. I was hoping that's how it would be.

"You quickly get beyond measuring every word or being worried about making mistakes. You want to show what you did all year, and I got excited about the gigantic audience that would be watching. But I didn't view it as intimidating. I looked at it as an opportunity."

Steve Grayson/WireImage/Getty Images

Phil Simms, the MVP of Super Bowl XXI, is now a game analyst for CBS Sports' NFL coverage.

Most broadcasters who have handled the NFL's marquee event generally take the same approach. They know it's not the cliched "just another game" because, as CBS analyst Phil Simms opines, "no one else treats it as just like any other game. We have more cameras than any other game. We have more slo-mo machines than any other game. We have a cast of thousands, and that's not like any other game. But if you started thinking about all that, it would drive you crazy.

"Now don't get me wrong," continues Simms, a one-time Giants quarterback and MVP of Super Bowl XXI. "It is exciting; it's very exciting. People are always asking me, 'Don't you get nervous?' No, not at all. That never crosses my mind. The way I look at it is that it's the easiest thing in the world because I'm talking about football. And that's much easier than playing."

Still, there have been times when all that equipment and manpower behind the scenes has made life miserable for the boys in the booth.

(Clockwise, from top): **Joe Buck called his first Super Bowl for FOX three years ago and is the network's lead broadcaster again this year. Greg Gumbel is flanked by Deion Sanders and Michael Irvin following Dallas' Super Bowl XXX victory. Dick Enberg (left) and Merlin Olsen stand tall among Super Bowl broadcast tandems.**

Dick Enberg, a veteran of eight Super Bowl play-by-play calls, will never forget Super Bowl XVII in Pasadena—the night the Washington Redskins earned Joe Gibbs his first title with a 27-17 victory over the Miami Dolphins. Twenty-five years later, he still describes it as "the most frightening experience I ever had doing a Super Bowl."

Before the game, Enberg was on the air and also plugged into the stadium public address system so he could announce the starting lineups to the crowd at the Rose Bowl. He got through those names and numbers with no problem, but when NBC came back from a commercial for the opening kickoff, the two-second delay from Enberg's mouth into the PA system had not been adjusted for the game broadcast.

"Words were coming out of my mouth and moments later I'm hearing them in my ear. The same for [analyst] Merlin Olsen," Enberg recalls. "It was just maddening. I was thinking it had to be sabotage; that maybe the other networks were messing around with us. And this kept going on during the first quarter. We learned very quickly that we had to speak in short, staccato sentences, so I'd just say 'third-and-seven at the 21' and stop. I'd hear myself say it in my ear, then went on to the next sentence. They eventually fixed it, but I wasn't very happy.

"When the game was over, I came storming out of the booth. I thought it was the worst game I had ever called. We had a party at the house that night and my family had taped the game. So I sat there and watched it, and you know what, because of the brevity of our comments, we didn't over-talk. We didn't drown the audience with information, which you can do sometimes, and in the end, I thought we'd done a pretty good job."

Enberg was a young sportscaster in Los Angeles for Super Bowl I, a game that was shown by both CBS (which handled the NFL) and NBC (which carried the old American Football League). Commissioner Pete Rozelle felt both networks had earned the right to broadcast the game, but there wasn't a lot of laughter between the two competing camps that year.

The late Hall of Fame broadcaster Curt Gowdy, who called the game for NBC, once joked, "We went to a couple of production meetings at CBS and it was like sneaking into the enemy's tent." The late Ray Scott, who split CBS play-by-play duties that year with Jack Whitaker, said at one point, "They had to put up a fence between the technicians" to keep them from sabotaging each other's equipment.

Cooler heads have prevailed ever since, and the technical glitches that so annoyed Enberg in that Washington-Miami game have been few and far between. Yet Enberg also was involved in keeping peace in the booth before Super Bowl XIII. Gowdy and John Brodie had formed one NBC team that year while Enberg had paired with Olsen, and producer Don Ohlmeyer wanted a three-man booth for the Super Bowl.

"The question was who would be the odd man out," Enberg says. "Gowdy was a good friend, and I went to Don and told him I thought [Curt] ought to do the game. I felt my time would come, so the three of them worked the broadcast. And of course eventually I got my chance."

John Madden got his chance to announce a Super Bowl mostly because of his work as an in-studio guest on CBS' Super Bowl XIV pregame show hosted by Brent Musburger.

"We brought George Allen and Madden in as studio analysts that year," Musburger says. "John was so colorful and so good, it prompted CBS to put him in the No. 1 analyst's chair. From that performance, everyone knew he would become be a top-flight analyst, and the next year he got teamed with Pat Summerall. Pretty good move, I'd say."

There were others.

In Super Bowl XXXV, Greg Gumbel made his first of two Super Bowl play-by-play calls for NBC, and also made history as the first African American ever to handle that job at a Super Bowl.

"I didn't even realize it until a couple of reporters asked me about it," Gumbel says. "To tell you the truth, it's really not something I ever thought about. Sometimes you do carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. But me doing the Super Bowl was not like Jackie Robinson playing baseball in the major leagues for the first time."

History also was made when Joe Buck did his first Super Bowl for FOX. His father is the late Jack Buck, for decades the radio/TV voice of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball and football teams. The elder Buck was behind the microphone for CBS at Super Bowl IV, and when Joe handled the call for Super Bowl XXXIX, it made them the first father-son combination ever to handle Super Bowl broadcasts.

That game could easily have been a disaster for Buck's analyst, Cris Collinsworth. The day before the game, the announcing crew went to ALLTEL Stadium to check out the broadcast booth, the better to avoid any surprises the following evening. Another good move.

"When Collinsworth sat down, he realized he would not be able to see the players' numbers," Buck recalls. "He never needed glasses before, but we were so high up, he knew he was going to be in serious trouble. He literally was whisked away on the spot to one of those places that makes eyeglasses in an hour.

"That was also Troy Aikman's first [Super Bowl] game, and I was just amazed how calm he was. I didn't know what to expect from him, and I'm sure he didn't know what to expect from me. But it was a normal telecast. No problems. I tried to disarm the situation before the game. I remember saying to him, 'We're actually going to play a football game.'"

One day before Super Bowl XXX between Dallas and Pittsburgh, Steelers head coach Bill Cowher told the NBC announcing crew he was going to use an onside kick in the game. He all but diagrammed the play so NBC's cameramen could be cued by the movement of a specific player on the kickoff team, and he swore the announcers to total secrecy.

"We thought they were going to do it on the opening play," says Paul Maguire, in the booth for NBC that day, "and I'm telling you, no opening kickoff had more coverage. We had guys killing themselves to make sure they got the right picture, but Cowher didn't do it then. He waited until the second half, and boy did we cover the heck out of that one, too."

Frank Micelotta/Getty Images

Before making his way to the broadcast booth, John Madden was a studio analyst for CBS Sports.

On Super Bowl Sunday, just getting to the opening kickoff can be a major chore for broadcasters. They often arrive at the stadium seven or eight hours before the game, aiming to avoid typically heavy Super Bowl traffic and also to rehearse and occasionally do cut-ins during the lengthy pregame show.

Marv Albert, who has handled play-by-play for CBS/Westwood One Radio the last five years, said the wait for that first play can seem interminable and even present something of a problem.

"You've got to be very careful because you can lose your sharpness, and you want to be on top of your game right from the start," Albert says. "Last year was no problem. [Bears return man Devin] Hester took the opening kickoff all the way for a touchdown, and that got everyone's heart started. It was perfect.

"But you also have to guard against overdoing it. When you call a football game on television, you set up your color commentator, and replays often dictate what you're going to say. You've got the graphics, where it's all spelled out for the viewer—down and distance, how much time is left, statistics.

"On radio, you are the game. Now you've got to say, 'First and 10 from the 30,' and 'They're in an offset I, with a man in the slot.' 'Here comes a blitz,' 'He throws to his right,' and on and on. It's exhausting, but also exhilarating. You know you've got the largest radio audience of the year and that makes it very special. And everyone in the stadium has a radio at their seat, so you know some of those people are listening to you as well."

With that expectation, however, comes the occasional humbling moment.

Enberg recalls doing one Super Bowl and, as was his custom, calling his wife, Barbara, back home in San Diego after going off the air.

"She got on the phone and was so happy," Enberg says. "She said, 'You wouldn't believe it, the weather in San Diego was like summer and I took the kids to the beach for the day, but there was no one there.' I said, 'Honey, no one was there because of the Super Bowl.' She'd completely forgotten about it.

"There was another game where Merlin's wife, Susan, sat up in the VIP section with Fred Silverman, who was running NBC at the time. After the game, NBC had a party in the hotel. We thought we had a really good game, and when we got to the party, Susan came up and told us that Silverman really liked the telecast.

"We were feeling pretty good about it until we asked her what it was he liked. She answered, 'He liked the fact that you got off the air right on time.' He'd been worried about the rating for the show immediately following the game and wanted it to start exactly when it was supposed to start. At least we did something right."

Leonard Shapiro has covered the NFL for The Washington Post *since 1972 and also writes about sports broadcasting. He is a winner of the Dick McCann Award for distinguished reporting on professional football and was honored by the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2002.*

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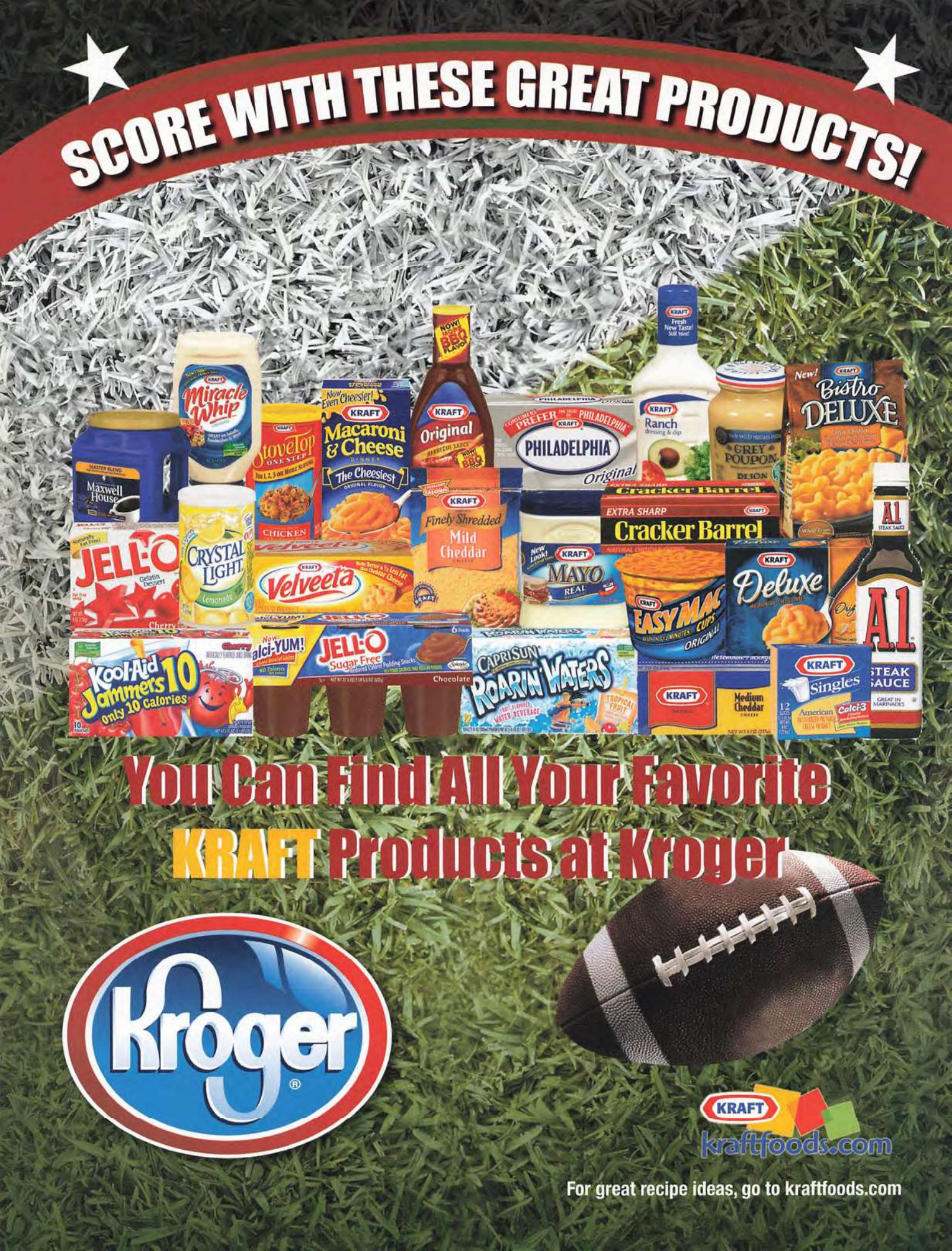

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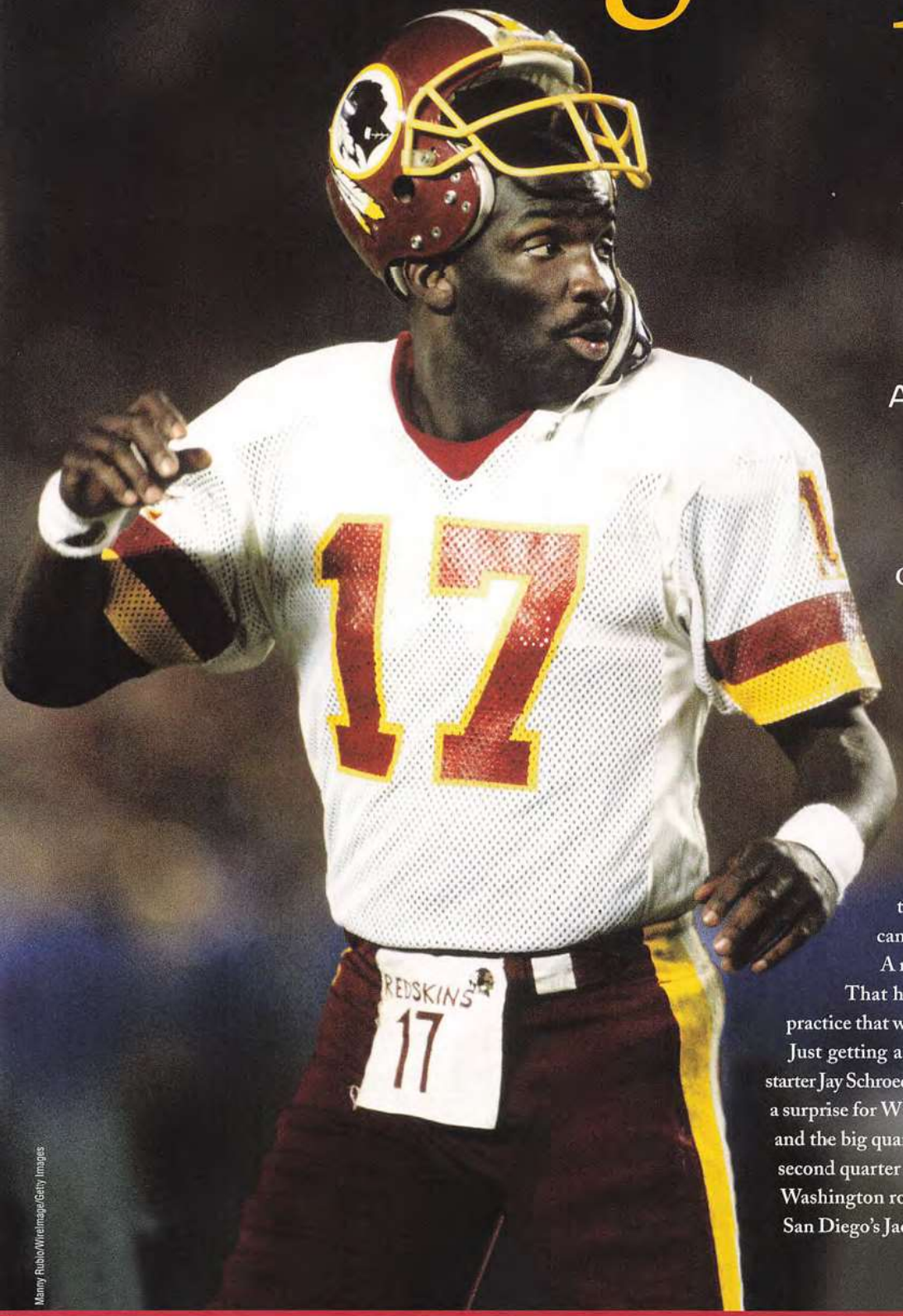

Manny Rubio/WireImage/Getty Images

WITH HIS HISTORIC PERFORMANCE 20 YEARS AGO, DOUG WILLIAMS SMASHED BOTH STEREOTYPES AND SUPER BOWL RECORDS.

by Thomas George

Guess what helped Doug Williams roll into that trampling spell 20 years ago in Super Bowl XXII?

Go ahead, make any sense of the day before, the night before, how he prepared for that marvelous game, especially that mind-blowing second quarter, when he rose and delivered a world championship for the Washington Redskins and a cultural exam for America.

"I didn't even practice the day before the game," Williams recalls. "I had a root canal. I went to a La Jolla dentist."

A root canal?

That helped settle him, he says, after a week of practice that was "the greatest" he ever had.

Just getting a shot to play that season, when Redskins starter Jay Schroeder grew cold and injured late in the year, was a surprise for Williams. Yet it paved a path to his big game and the big quarter. That four-touchdown pass, 35-point second quarter that Williams orchestrated. The one that Washington rode to a 42-10 victory over the Broncos at San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium.

"I can close my eyes and see it all like it was yesterday".

NFL Wirelmage/Getty Images

Takashi Makita/Wirelmage/Getty Images

Long before his Super Bowl heroics, Doug Williams was a star at Grambling (top) **playing for the legendary Eddie Robinson. He became Tampa Bay's first-round pick in 1978 and led the team to the NFC Championship Game in his second pro season.**

So, a trip to the dentist the day before. How about the night before?

"I ate a bag full of Hershey's Kisses," Williams says. "Just watched TV and enjoyed the candy. It became a ritual for me before big games."

Both were part of Williams' game plan for Super Bowl XXII. They led to a performance so good, its memory has survived all these years and continues to make Redskins fans giddy every time they see the highlights. Whether it was "Charlie 10 Hitch," "Scram 7," or "Scram H Corner," Williams and his receivers kept connecting and kept scoring.

Finally, an African-American quarterback had played in a Super Bowl. And he won it. That scrutiny was a burden for Williams entering the game. Now, 20 years later—and mission accomplished—it is not a burden but a badge he has worn nobly.

"I can close my eyes and see it all like it was yesterday," Williams says. "After we did it, late in the fourth quarter, I put my hands in my front pockets. It was announced that I was MVP. Everyone came up and tapped me on the head. Every memory—from the time I first picked up a football until that very moment—was flashing before me. A Rolodex. A kaleidoscope. The journey passed before me in an instant.

"It just wasn't supposed to be carved out for a black man to do this. The Ku Klux Klan used to ride up and down the street in my hometown of Zachary, Louisiana. But that Super Bowl happened to me. And it makes me think of what Martin Luther King said: 'I've been to the mountain top…I've seen over onto the other side.'

"I was there. For four quarters and especially for that second quarter, I was there. Yesterday didn't matter. Tomorrow, I was not going to worry about it. I was there. For that moment, right then, I was there."

These days he is in Tampa Bay, working with the Buccaneers as a personnel executive, back in the city where his NFL journey began in 1978 after being a first-round selection out of Grambling. People thank him for coming back. They thank him for joining the community. When he travels, people recognize him. They remember.

"In airports, young people will come up and say, 'You're the guy my mom was praying so hard for,' or an older person will tell me, 'Son, I know nothing about football, but I was praying for you on that day.'

"It's black fans; it's white fans," Williams says. "You can't buy that. It's priceless."

Some of his fans now play for the Redskins.

"Jason Campbell, the young Washington quarterback, called me when he was drafted to ask if he could wear my number 17. What a great feeling. That game has brought many great feelings over the years."

As is so often the case with these kinds of stories, it almost never happened. Redskins head coach Joe Gibbs had negotiated a trade early on in 1987 that would have sent Williams to the Raiders. Williams was happy—he'd get to start and, truth be told, he always had an affinity for the "silver and black." He even let his family and friends in on the news.

But the next morning, Gibbs changed his mind, explaining to a now angry Williams, "Douglas, I just have a feeling somewhere this season you're going to come in here and we're going to win this thing."

Williams appeared in five games during the regular season, helping the Redskins—runaway winners in the NFC East—to finish 11-4.

While the 49ers had gone 13-2 and held home-field advantage for the conference playoffs, the plot-line changed when they lost to the Vikings, while the Redskins went on the road and beat Chicago in Walter

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(Right) **President Ronald Reagan is presented a football and a Redskins shirt by Williams during a White House ceremony honoring the Super Bowl XXII champions.** (Below) **Following Grambling's 2001 win over Southern, Williams–then the head coach at his alma mater–received the ceremonial Gatorade dousing.**

Dirck Halstead/Getty Images

Bill Haber/AP/WWP

Payton's final game. That sent the NFC title game to the nation's capitol, where Williams and his team toppled Minnesota, 17-10, for the conference crown.

But early on in Super Bowl XXII, things did not look promising. Denver had scored the first 10 points and Williams was hurt, injuring his knee while being tackled. It was a twisting, turning, nasty pretzel-looking injury.

"The trainers came on the field," Williams recalls. "I motioned to the trainer with my hand first. Then I told him, 'Don't touch me.' I knew if I could get up on my own, I was going to finish this game. As long as I could stand without help, I would be all right."

Gibbs was initially concerned.

"I thought he was done," recalls the coach. "But [Doug] came to the sideline for a play and had that look in his eye that said, 'I'm not coming out of here.'"

With his team trailing and in trouble, there was Williams—injured knee and all—jogging back onto the field and about to embark on the greatest quarter in Super Bowl history.

"I've never seen a quarter like that before," says Gibbs. "It maybe happens once in a lifetime in coaching. Every play we called probably averaged eight yards. You just don't have that."

Williams started the onslaught by hitting Ricky Sanders for an 80-yard touchdown, then followed with a 27-yard scoring throw to Gary Clark that put Washington in the lead. After Timmy Smith's 50-yard TD run, Williams connected with Sanders a second time and then threw a final strike to Clint Didier just before halftime. Five touchdowns on five straight possessions. And the whole thing took all of 18 plays.

By the time it was over, the Redskins had not only scored the most points in one half in Super Bowl history, they had accomplished it in one quarter. Their 602 total yards for the game also set a Super Bowl mark.

Williams says the whole "black quarterback" subject was never an issue for the team. It was more important and a distraction to the rest of the world, he said, adding that his teammates understood the hype. Williams says they also knew this: He gave them the best chance to win. For his teammates, that was more than enough.

"After it was all over," says Anthony Jones, Williams' roommate for that game and now the head coach at Alabama A&M, "Doug bought the offensive line and tight ends commemorative watches. It was very nice. When you're a part of history, you don't necessarily realize it [at first]. Then you talk, appreciate, and learn to relish.

"It was a blessing to be with him the night before, to talk and share history. I don't take that for granted. Over the years, I have relished it even more."

So have Steve McNair and Donovan McNabb, black quarterbacks who have played in the Super Bowl since Williams. So have Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith, who last year made history as the first black head coaches to reach the Super Bowl. And so have football fans of all races who saw in Williams what Gibbs saw.

"One of the things I always admired about Doug was his great leadership," Gibbs says. "The players really responded and looked up to him.

"He was also very relaxed. I've often told the story when we were getting ready for a playoff game, and I turned to my side and saw Doug yawning. He belonged on the big stage."

Once the ring was won and the locker room celebration complete, Williams returned to the team hotel with his family. His knee was too sore to stand, but that didn't lessen the excitement or satisfaction. He describes it as "moments of sunshine during the middle of the night."

The TV commercials and endorsements—normal for most Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks, particularly MVPs—did not come for him. He learned to accept that gracefully, though for years it hurt deeply. Williams has too many magical memories to let anything steal his joy.

He thinks back to then-Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke and the "Way to go!" salute Cooke offered him after the Super Bowl victory was complete. He thinks of his father, Robert, who died in 1989 at age 67, who had lived in a wheelchair and demanded of his son to always finish what he started. And he thinks of his mother, Laura, now 78, who always took the bus instead of a plane—"No baby, I got time," she would insist—and who still reminds Williams now of her pride in him.

Williams remembers the victory parade in Washington, D.C., how the city coalesced, how politicians threw aside their biases, and how color—even if it was just for a few hours—did not matter. It makes him shiver. Even now, when he sees a championship game, he says chills run down his back. He has been down that road, up that mountain. He has seen the other side.

Doug Williams will watch Super Bowl XLII and more chills will come. And like a Rolodex, like a kaleidoscope, so will the memories.

"Sometimes I feel bad that I got all the glory," says Williams, who played two more seasons before retiring at age 34. "The historical impact...they were all part of it—teammates, family, and friends.

"Every day I think about some part of the story," he adds. "It has gone by so fast; it seems like yesterday.

"When I get up and jog at 5 a.m., a whole lot goes through my mind. No one else is out there but me. But I don't feel alone."

Thomas George is NFL Network managing editor. He is a former Denver Post, New York Times *and* Detroit Free Press *writer/columnist.*

REVERSALS of FORTUNE

FROM WILLIE WOOD IN SUPER BOWL I TO KELVIN HAYDEN LAST YEAR, INTERCEPTIONS HAVE SUPPLIED THE SUPER BOWL'S BIGGEST MOMENTUM SWINGS.

by Ray Didinger

In the American time capsule, the first Super Bowl has been reduced to a handful of lasting images. Max McGee pulling in a touchdown pass. Jim Taylor scoring on a power sweep. Head coach Vince Lombardi smiling as he accepts the winner's trophy.

That's how most people remember Green Bay's 35-10 win over Kansas City. A ho-hum affair, never in doubt. But that's not how it was, not really.

Vernon Biever/WireImage/Getty Images

A third-quarter interception by Green Bay's **Willie Wood** derailed Kansas City's bid for an upset in Super Bowl I.

At the half, the score was Green Bay 14, Kansas City 10 and the mighty Packers—who had been expected to crush the upstarts from the American Football League—realized the Chiefs were much better than advertised. Lombardi, whose team was in the midst of winning five NFL championships in a seven-year span, walked through the quiet locker room with a look of genuine worry on his face.

"In Vince's mind, everything he had built in Green Bay, the whole Packer dynasty, would have gone up in smoke if we lost that game," McGee later said. "We had been laughing at the AFL for years, calling it the 'Mickey Mouse league.' We thought the game would be a joke, but [there] we were at halftime and we were fighting for our lives."

The Chiefs had taken the fight to the NFL champs.

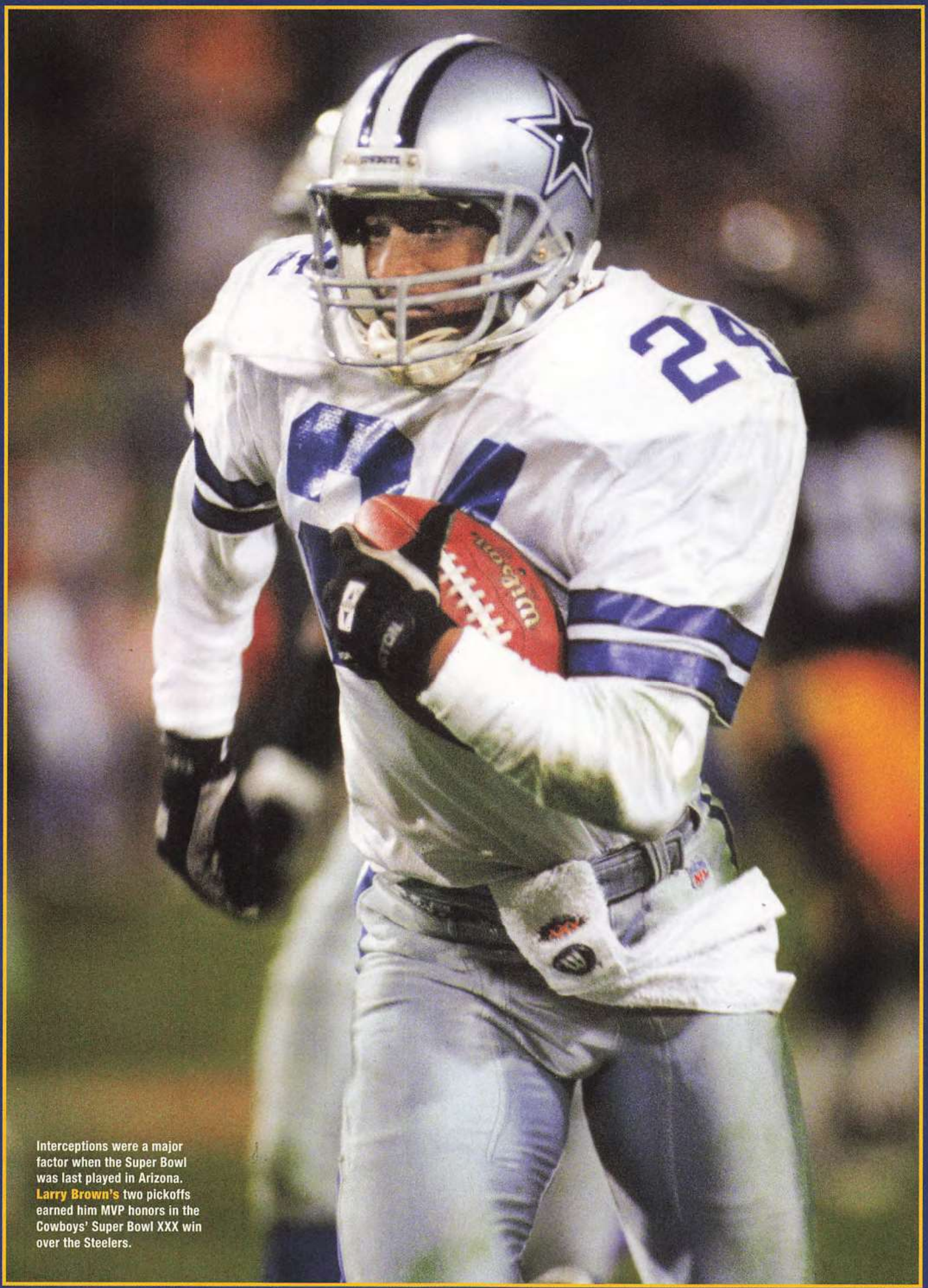
"We had a nice drive right before the half, we kicked a field goal, and I felt we were taking control of the game," recalls Len Dawson, the Kansas City quarterback. "Going into the game, I thought some of our guys were in awe of the Packers, but in those first 30 minutes, we gained more and more confidence.

"We shut down their running game, and we scored on our last two possessions [of the half]. At that point, I really felt we were going to win."

But that feeling evaporated on Dawson's first pass after the break. Hurried by a blitz, he underthrew tight end Fred Arbanas, allowing All-Pro free safety Willie Wood to swoop in for an interception (the first in Super Bowl history). Wood returned the ball to the Kansas City 5, and on the next play Elijah Pitts scored to push the Packers' lead to 21-10. The Chiefs were never in the game after that.

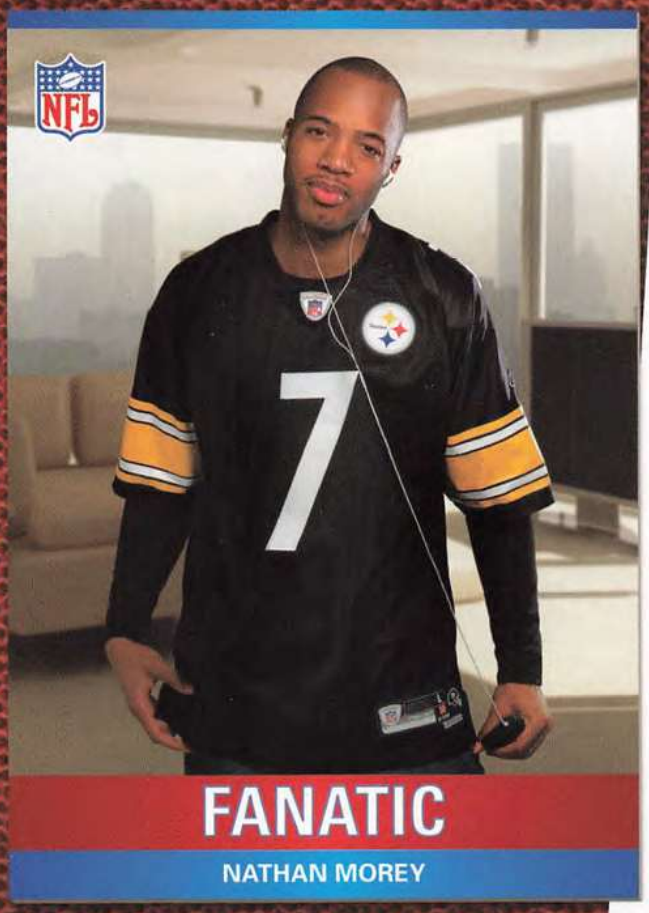
"You don't like to think one play can make that much of a difference, but in this case it did," admitted Kansas City head coach Hank Stram after the game.

"The interception deflated us," says Dawson. "I've seen that happen so many times over the years. [An interception] is a huge emotional swing, especially when it leads to points, and it seems like the bigger the game, the bigger the swing."



Interceptions were a major factor when the Super Bowl was last played in Arizona. **Larry Brown's** two pickoffs earned him MVP honors in the Cowboys' Super Bowl XXX win over the Steelers.

James D. Smith/Wirelmage/Getty Images



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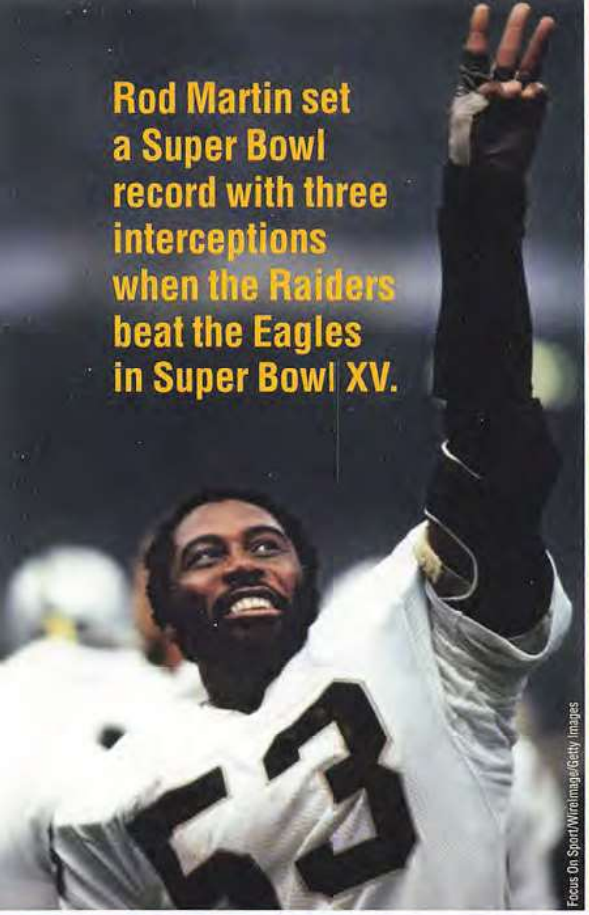

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Rod Martin (left) **flashes a finger for each of his three interceptions in Super Bowl XV.** **Kelvin Hayden** (right) **steps in for a game-changing pickoff in Super Bowl XLI.**

It's a storyline that runs through virtually all 41 Super Bowls, including last year's rain-soaked affair in South Florida. Late in the third quarter, Robbie Gould kicked a 44-yard field goal to pull the underdog Chicago Bears within five points of Indianapolis, 22-17. On their next possession, when quarterback Rex Grossman completed a 22-yard pass to Muhsin Muhammad, the Bears had momentum on their side. Then Grossman searched out Muhammad again and it all changed.

Cornerback Kelvin Hayden cut in front of the Chicago wide receiver, intercepted the pass along the right sideline, and returned it 56 yards for a touchdown. The play put the Colts safely ahead, 29-17. When safety Bob Sanders picked off another Grossman pass on the next series, the Bears were finished.

"We knew Grossman could throw some bad passes," Hayden said afterwards. "As soon as the ball left his hand, I said to myself, 'This is my ball.' As soon as I caught it, I was thinking end zone. I don't know how I got there, but I kept running and hoping, and all of a sudden I was there. What a great feeling. It's something you always think about as a kid."

There were multiple levels of irony to Hayden's interception. For one thing, he was only in the game because starting left cornerback Nick Harper had limped off the field with an ankle injury. Furthermore, it was Hayden's first NFL interception. Toss in the fact that he grew up in Chicago as a Bears fan and went to the University of Illinois (where he played for coach Ron Turner, the Bears' offensive coordinator in Super Bowl XLI) and the whole thing seems like a fairy tale.

"I'm a die-hard Bears fan; it's instilled in me," added Hayden. "I rooted for them all season. But when it comes time to play against them, it's a business. Right now, I'm just happy I was able to help the Colts win a championship."

Hayden became the 10th player in Super Bowl history to score a touchdown on an interception return. The list includes Hall of Famers such as Herb Adderley of the Packers (Super Bowl II) and Willie Brown of the Oakland Raiders (Super Bowl XI), as well as one-shot wonders Jack Squirek of the Raiders (Super Bowl XVIII) and Reggie Phillips of the Bears (Super Bowl XX). But there's one thing they have in common: They all played on the winning team. That's a telling bottom line.

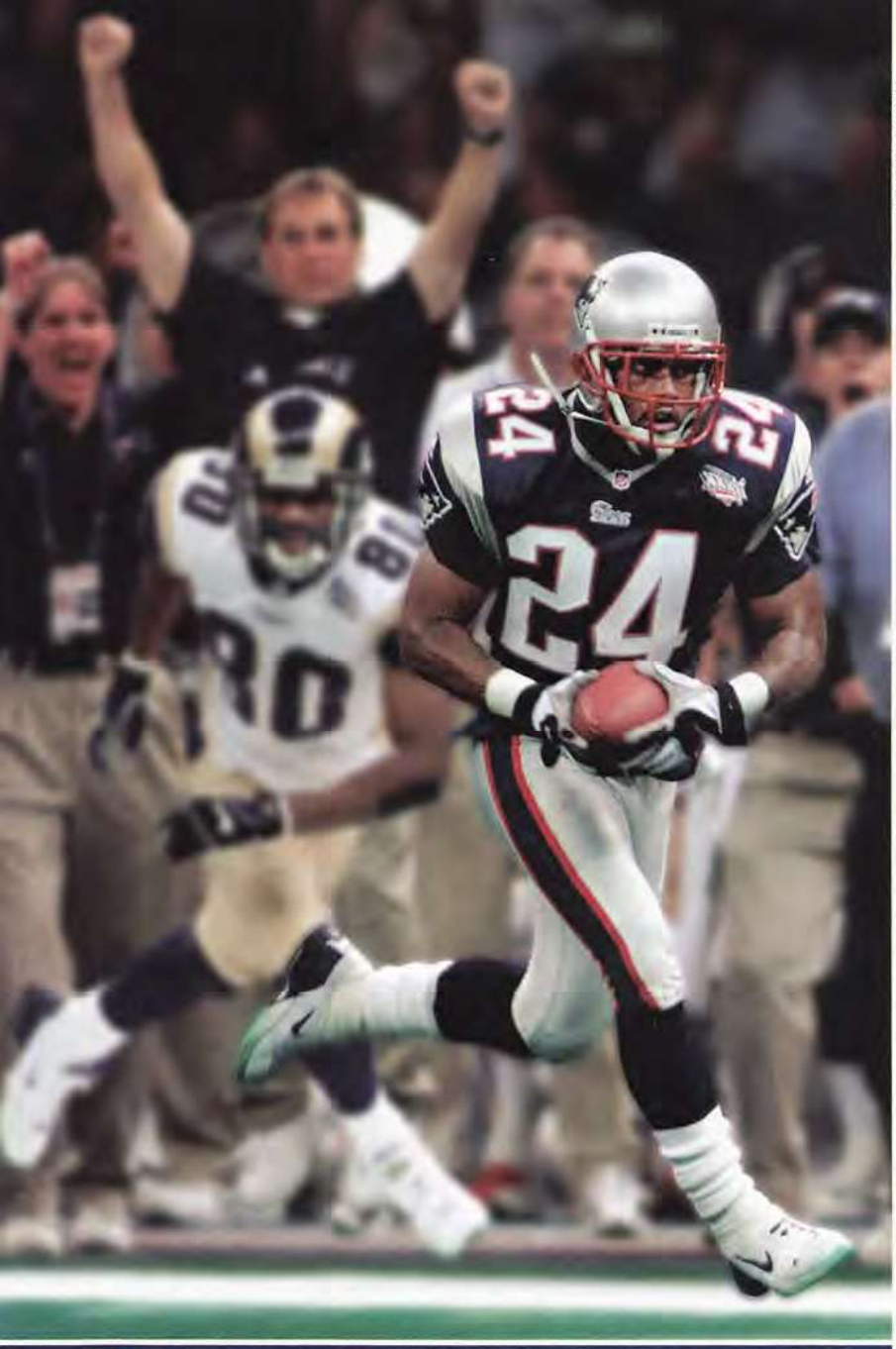
Teams have returned kickoffs for touchdowns in Super Bowls and lost. Teams have lost with 100-yard rushers (three times) and 300-yard passers (six times). But teams that have scored on an interception return are a perfect 8-0 in Super Bowls, a mark led by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who had three such touchdowns—two by cornerback Dwight Smith, one by linebacker Derrick Brooks—in their 48-21 rout of Oakland in Super Bowl XXXVII.

You could argue that interceptions are the biggest plays in football's biggest game. The 41 Super Bowl winners have grabbed a total of 90 interceptions, better than two per game. Meanwhile, teams that have avoided throwing an interception own a winning percentage of .893.

If you've ever wondered how San Francisco quarterback Joe Montana was able to win four Super Bowls, wonder no more. He threw 122 passes in his trips to the league's title game; none were intercepted. Meanwhile, his counterparts—Ken Anderson (Super Bowl XVI), Dan Marino (Super Bowl XIX), Boomer Esiason (Super Bowl XXIII), and John Elway (Super Bowl XXIV)—were picked off seven times.

More than any other play, it seems, an interception turns a game upside-down. It causes doubt on the part of the coach, who wonders if he called the wrong play, as well as the quarterback, who wonders if he misread the coverage. It sets an offense back on its heels, mentally. It drains a team's confidence.

A fumble is different. A player takes a hard hit and loses the ball, the



Adrees Latif/Reuters/Corbis

Ty Law heads for the end zone after stepping in front of Isaac Bruce for an interception in Super Bowl XXXVI. His 47-yard return for a touchdown keyed the Patriots' upset of the Rams.

other team recovers, and hey, that's football. It hurts for sure, but it is less likely to linger. An interception is more insidious because it can get inside a quarterback's head and destroy his focus. All of a sudden, one interception becomes two, then three, and just like that, the game is over.

Three interceptions is the record for a single player in a Super Bowl, a mark set by Oakland linebacker Rod Martin in Super Bowl XV. He picked off Philadelphia quarterback Ron Jaworski on the third play from scrimmage, setting up a Jim Plunkett-to-Cliff Branch touchdown pass. From there, the Raiders coasted to a 27-10 victory.

Similar to Hayden, there was nothing in Martin's history to suggest he was capable of such heroics. In four NFL seasons, he had picked off just two passes, yet he exceeded that total in one day against the NFC champion Eagles. Actually, there was one hint: a card game the Raiders played to pass the time during Super Bowl week.

"It was called 'Crazy Eights,'" Martin says, "and if you won three games in a row it was a Triple Crown. That week I had three Triple Crowns, which was unheard of. The day of the game, [linebacker] Ted Hendricks said, 'Why don't you get a Triple Crown today? This is the day for it.' We laughed. Then I went out and intercepted three passes. It sounds like a made-up story, but I swear it happened just that way."

Some interceptions, such as Martin's early pick in Super Bowl XV, set a tone. Other times, they turn the tide. The Baltimore Colts were expected to demolish the New York Jets in Super Bowl III. Early in the second quarter, the Colts were poised to break a scoreless tie when quarterback Earl Morrall sought out an open Tom Mitchell in the end zone. But the ball bounced off the tight end's chest and fluttered into the arms of Jets cornerback Randy Beverly for what was the first of four New York interceptions.

Joe Namath quickly capitalized on the break. The Jets quarterback led an 80-yard drive, finished off by Matt Snell's 4-yard touchdown run, that sent the AFL champions on their way to a stunning 16-7 upset.

But if the Colts had scored first, who knows?

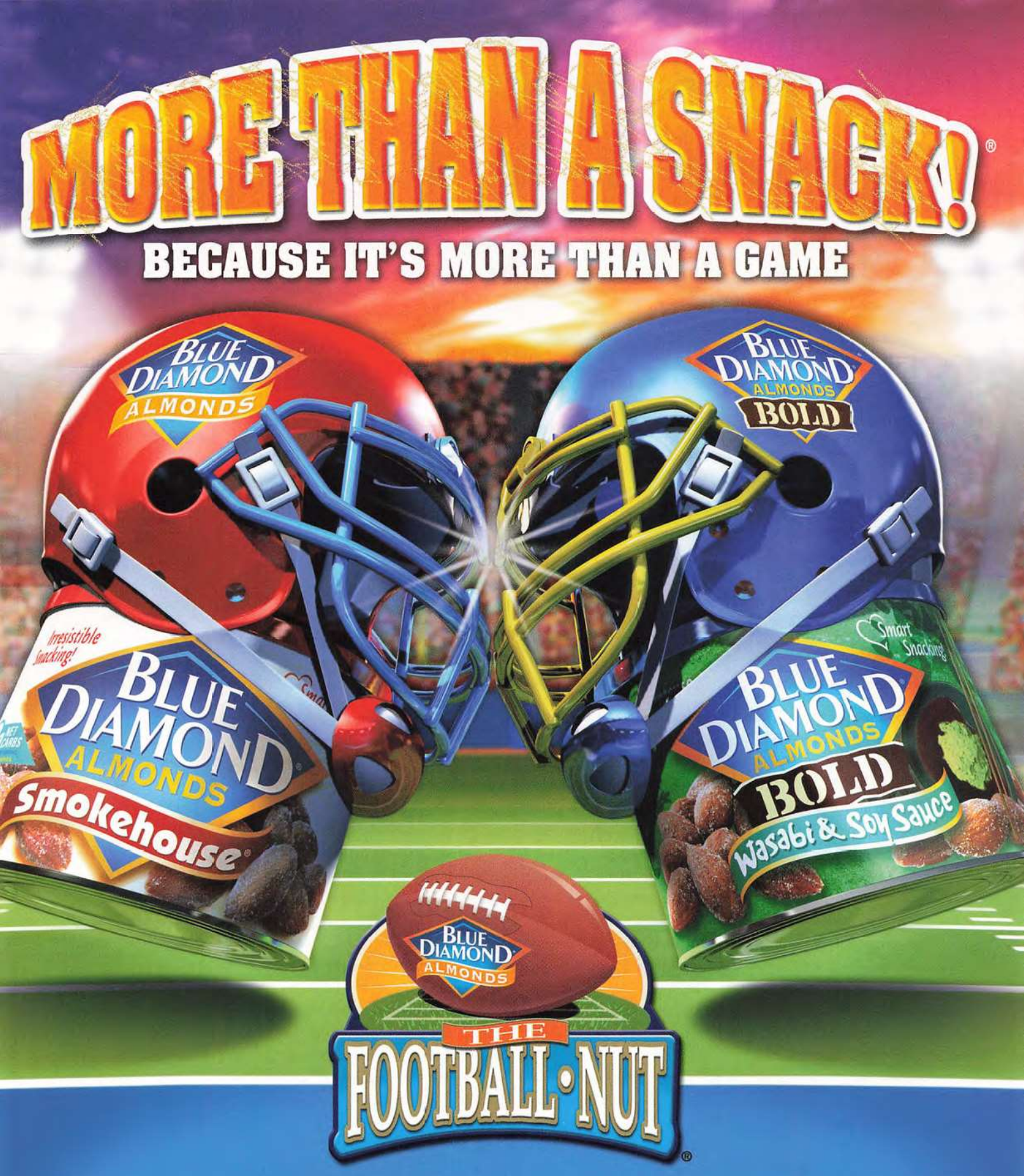
"You're always looking for something positive, especially if you're the underdog," said Johnny Sample, the Jets defensive captain who later killed another Baltimore drive with a goal-line interception. "Whatever picks you up knocks the other guy down, and Randy's interception definitely knocked the Colts down. They thought they had seven [points], but instead they were seven in the hole just like that."

Two years later, the Colts were back in the Super Bowl and this time they came up with the timely interceptions to defeat Dallas. They trailed, 13-6, in the fourth quarter before safety Rick Volk intercepted a Craig Morton pass to set up the tying touchdown by fullback Tom Nowatzke. Then, in the final minute, middle linebacker Mike Curtis hauled in another Morton misfire that set the stage for Jim O'Brien's 32-yard field goal and a 16-13 Baltimore win.

"Everyone remembers Mike's [interception] because it set up the field goal," says Morrall, who took over behind center in relief of an injured Johnny Unitas, "but I thought Rick's play was even bigger because it got us back in the game. We were frustrated all day and that interception [Volk returned it 30 yards to the Dallas 3-yard line] let us punch in a touchdown. It was the lift we needed."

Some would contend that New England's run of three Super Bowl victories in four seasons began as the result of an interception by cornerback Ty Law. The Patriots were considered big underdogs in Super Bowl XXXVI and trailed the high-powered St. Louis Rams, 3-0, when Law stepped in front of Isaac Bruce to pick off a Kurt Warner pass. Law sprinted 47 yards for a touchdown, putting the Patriots on the board and providing the initial spark in what became a 20-17 triumph.

When New England earned its third Super Bowl ring in 2005, interceptions again played a big part. The Patriots' defense victimized Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb three times, with two of the picks hauled in by Rodney Harrison—one with the game scoreless and Philadelphia driving in the first quarter, the other coming in the game's final minute to clinch the 24-21 triumph.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TAKE YOUR PICK: OTHER NOTEWORTHY SUPER BOWL INTERCEPTIONS

Super Bowl VII Jake Scott intercepted two passes in Miami's 14-7 victory over the Redskins to become the first free safety to win Super Bowl MVP honors and allow the Dolphins to complete their perfect season.

Scott's first interception came in the second quarter with Miami protecting a 7-0 lead. The other was in the fourth quarter with Washington down by two touchdowns, but driving. Redskins quarterback Billy Kilmer tried to get a pass to Charley Taylor in the end zone, but Scott stole it away and returned it 55 yards.

Super Bowl XI Future Hall of Famer Willie Brown put his stamp on the Raiders' first Super Bowl triumph, with a 75-yard interception return for a touchdown in a 32-14 victory over Minnesota. The play stands as the longest interception return for a score in Super Bowl history.

Super Bowl XIV With the Steelers going for their fourth NFL title in six years, middle linebacker Jack Lambert came up with a play that helped put away the stubborn Los Angeles Rams.

The Rams trailed, 24-19, midway through the fourth quarter, but had driven deep into Pittsburgh territory. That's when Lambert intercepted a Vince Ferragamo pass intended for wide receiver Ron Smith. Three plays later, Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw completed a 45-yard bomb to John Stallworth, setting up a Franco Harris touchdown run that sealed Pittsburgh's 31-19 victory.

Super Bowl XVIII Jack Squirek was a reserve linebacker for the Raiders, but he played a key role in the team's 38-9 rout of Washington. Just before halftime, Squirek intercepted a Joe Theismann pass and scored a touchdown that gave Oakland a 21-3 lead.

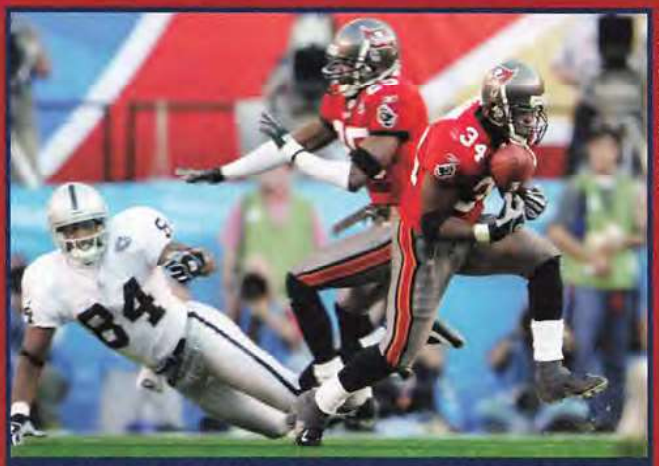
Super Bowl XXXIII While most people remember this as the final game in John Elway's splendid career, cornerback Darrien Gordon played an equally huge role in Denver's 34-19 victory over Atlanta.

The Broncos' pass defense ranked 26th in the NFL, but the secondary came up with four takeaways against the Falcons with Gordon leading the way. He had two interceptions that he returned for 108 yards, a Super Bowl record. The plays came on consecutive series in the third quarter and set up a pair of touchdowns that turned the game into a blowout.

Super Bowl XXXV The Ravens recorded four sacks and allowed the Giants to convert just two of 14 third-down situations, but the game remained close at halftime as Baltimore led 10-0. In the third quarter, however, cornerback Duane Starks intercepted a Kerry Collins pass and returned it 49 yards for a touchdown, keying a 34-7 win.

Super Bowl XXXVII With head coach Jon Gruden prepping his defense by playing the role of Raiders QB Rich Gannon in practice, the Bucs were able to call out Oakland's plays before the ball was snapped. The result? They picked off Gannon five times, returning three of the interceptions for TDs in a 48-21 rout. Free safety Dexter Jackson had two interceptions and won the game's MVP Award.

– Ray Didinger



John Lazar/WireImage/Getty Images

Dexter Jackson had two of Tampa Bay's interceptions in Super Bowl XXXVII.

The last time the NFL pitched its big tent in Arizona—Super Bowl XXX in Sun Devil Stadium—the difference was two interceptions, both in the fourth quarter and both by Dallas cornerback Larry Brown.

A 12th-round draft pick from TCU, Brown was another unlikely hero. Early in his career, he had dropped so many potential interceptions that teammate Emmitt Smith dubbed him "Edward Scissorhands." And in Super Bowl XXX, he was playing against the Pittsburgh Steelers and quarterback Neil O'Donnell, who had the lowest interception percentage in NFL history. Yet Brown became the first cornerback to take home Most Valuable Player honors in a Super Bowl.

Give some credit to Deion Sanders, the All-Pro corner playing on the other side. "Neon Deion" was in his first season with the Cowboys and opponents rarely threw his way. They preferred to take their chances with Brown, which made perfect sense…except on that late afternoon in Tempe when O'Donnell got careless and threw two aerials right into Brown's waiting arms.

"The first one, the ball slipped out of his hand," remembers Brown. "On the second one, it looked like his receiver [Andre Hastings] was supposed to adjust his route but didn't. [O'Donnell] wound up throwing the ball right to me. It was a freebie, a gift, but I'll take it. I mean, what was I supposed to do, throw it back to him?"

Not likely, given the circumstances. The Cowboys were ahead as they closed in on their third Super Bowl title in four years, but they were hanging on like a weary prizefighter slumped against the ropes. The Steelers' offense outgained Dallas, 201-61, in the second half and they kept chopping away at the lead. Although they closed to within six points (13-7) in the third quarter and later got within three, Brown's interceptions stemmed that momentum in Dallas' eventual 27-17 win.

"We were hurting; we really were," admits Leon Lett, the Cowboys defensive tackle. "You're tired, you're trying to catch your breath. Guys would be looking down and we'd say, 'Keep your eyes up, keep your head up.' We needed somebody to make a play and Larry did."

The big play was the second one. The Steelers had possession at their own 32-yard line with 4:15 remaining and things were definitely swinging their way following a successful onside kick, a Bam Morris touchdown, and a defensive stand that forced a Dallas punt. A field goal would tie the game; a touchdown could win it. But Brown swiped O'Donnell's errant pass and returned it 33 yards, allowing Emmitt Smith to ice the game two plays later on a 4-yard touchdown run.

"[Teammates] Brock Marion and Darren Woodson came over and said, 'You won the MVP,'" Brown says. "I was like, 'Are you serious?' I couldn't believe it because the award always goes to a quarterback or running back. It almost never goes to a defensive player. I thought if anybody [on defense] would win it, it would be Deion, not me.

"Then some other people came over and said it was true. It was a great moment in my life, not so much because I won the MVP but because we won the game. I'm happy I got noticed, but I didn't feel like I did anything special. I just did my job."

Ray Didinger is a senior producer with NFL Films. He has written nine books, including The Eagles Encyclopedia *and* One Last Read, the Collected Works of the World's Slowest Sportswriter, *both published by Temple University Press.*

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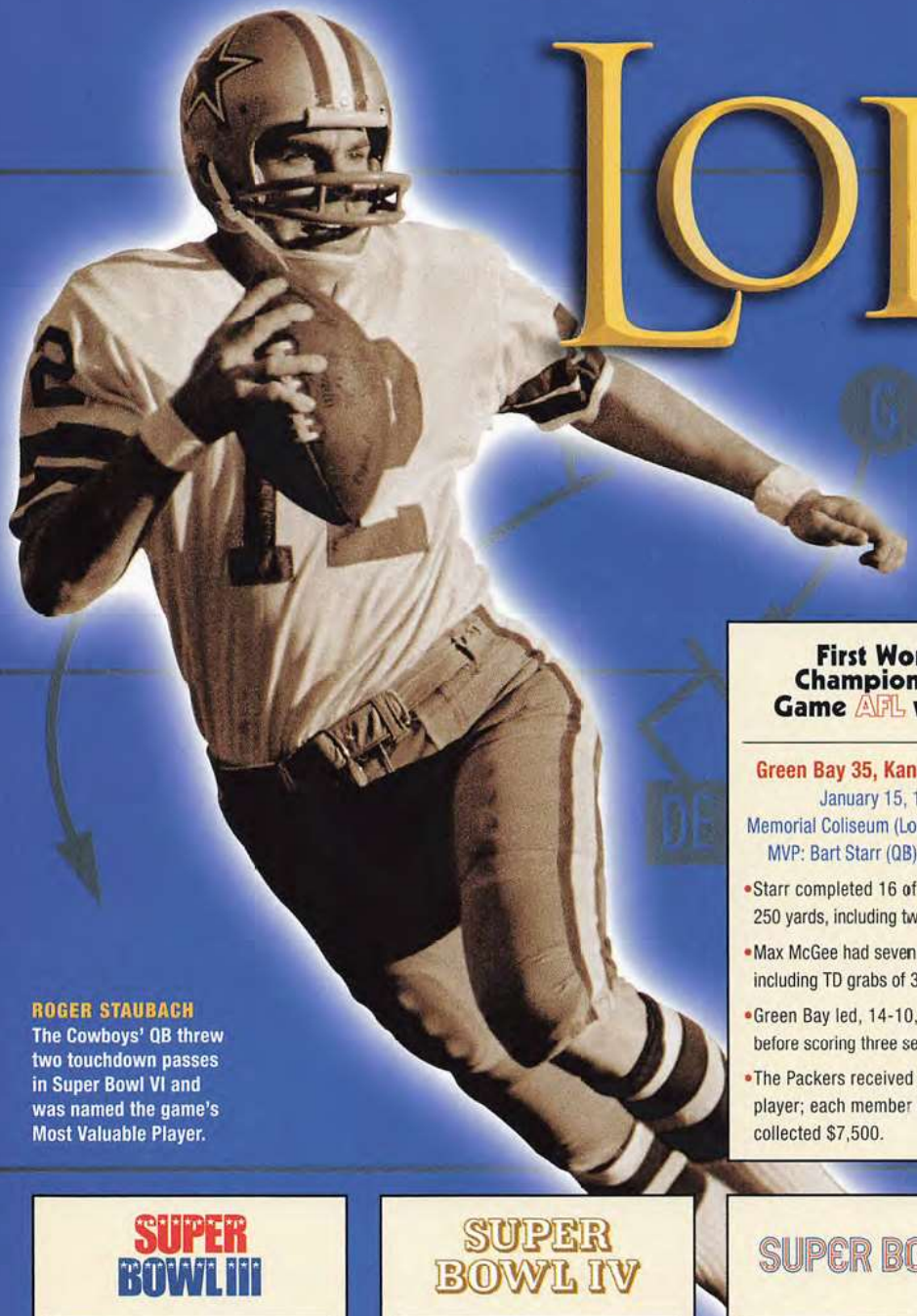

ROGER STAUBACH
The Cowboys' QB threw two touchdown passes in Super Bowl VI and was named the game's Most Valuable Player.

Bettmann/Corbis

First World Championship Game AFL vs NFL

Green Bay 35, Kansas City 10
January 15, 1967
Memorial Coliseum (Los Angeles, CA)
MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Green Bay

- Starr completed 16 of 23 passes for 250 yards, including two touchdowns.
- Max McGee had seven receptions, including TD grabs of 37 and 7 yards.
- Green Bay led, 14-10, at halftime before scoring three second-half TDs.
- The Packers received $15,000 per player; each member of the Chiefs collected $7,500.

SUPER BOWL II

Green Bay 33, Oakland 14
January 14, 1968
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Green Bay

- Starr was again MVP, after going 13 of 24 for 202 yards and a TD.
- Green Bay's Don Chandler kicked four FGs (39, 20, 43, and 31 yards).
- The Packers' Herb Adderley scored the Super Bowl's first defensive TD on a 60-yard interception return.
- The game was the last for Vince Lombardi as Green Bay's coach.

SUPER BOWL III

N.Y. Jets 16, Baltimore 7
January 12, 1969
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Joe Namath (QB), New York

- Namath, who "guaranteed" a win on the Thursday before the game, went 17 of 28 for 206 passing yards.
- The Jets' Matt Snell rushed for 121 yards and scored on a 4-yard run.
- The Jets intercepted Colts QB Earl Morrall three times in the first half.
- New York's win was the first by the AFL in the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL IV

Kansas City 23, Minnesota 7
January 11, 1970
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Len Dawson (QB), Kansas City

- Dawson completed 12 of 17 passes and threw a 46-yard touchdown to Otis Taylor for the Chiefs' final score.
- Jan Stenerud's three FGs put the Chiefs' first nine points on the board.
- Kansas City forced five turnovers and held the Vikings to 67 yards rushing.
- Super Bowl IV marked the final game before the AFL-NFL merger.

SUPER BOWL V

Baltimore 16, Dallas 13
January 17, 1971
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Chuck Howley (LB), Dallas

- Howley (two interceptions) became the first defender and only player from a losing team chosen MVP.
- Jim O'Brien's 32-yard FG with five seconds to go broke a 13-13 tie.
- Mike Curtis' interception set up the game-winning kick.
- This was the first Super Bowl played on artificial turf.

SUPER BOWL VI

Dallas 24, Miami 3
January 16, 1972
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Roger Staubach (QB), Dallas

- Staubach completed 12 of 19 passes for 119 yards and two touchdowns.
- Dallas' Duane Thomas rushed for 95 yards, including a 3-yard TD, and Walt Garrison ran for 74 yards.
- Chuck Howley's fumble recovery and interception led to 10 Dallas points.
- The Cowboys allowed just 185 total yards and didn't give up a TD.

Three NFL teams—the 49ers, Cowboys, and Steelers—have won five Super Bowls. However, only one player, Charles Haley, has five Super Bowl rings.

I II III IV V VI

OF THE RINGS

Recapping the stars and stories of Super Bowls I-XLI.

SUPER BOWL VII

Miami 14, Washington 7
January 14, 1973
Memorial Coliseum (Los Angeles, CA)
MVP: Jake Scott (S), Miami

- Scott intercepted a pair of passes, including one in the end zone.
- Miami scored all its points in the first half—getting touchdowns on Bob Griese's 28-yard pass to Howard Twilley and Jim Kiick's 1-yard run.
- Including playoffs, the Dolphins went 17-0, accomplishing the first perfect season in NFL history.

SUPER BOWL VIII

Miami 24, Minnesota 7
January 13, 1974
Rice Stadium (Houston, TX)
MVP: Larry Csonka (RB), Miami

- Csonka rushed for 145 yards and opened the scoring with a 5-yard run. He later added a second touchdown.
- Jim Kiick scored on a 1-yard run and Garo Yepremian kicked a 28-yard field goal to make it 17-0 at halftime.
- Bob Griese threw only seven passes.
- The Dolphins became the first team to reach three straight Super Bowls.

SUPER BOWL IX

Pittsburgh 16, Minnesota 6
January 12, 1975
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Franco Harris (RB), Pittsburgh

- Harris rushed for 158 yards and scored on a 9-yard touchdown run.
- Terry Bradshaw threw a 4-yard TD pass to Larry Brown to clinch the win.
- Pittsburgh's defense yielded just 119 yards, including 17 rushing yards.
- Dwight White's second-quarter sack of Fran Tarkenton provided the Super Bowl with its first safety.

SUPER BOWL X

Pittsburgh 21, Dallas 17
January 18, 1976
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Lynn Swann (WR), Pittsburgh

- Swann caught four passes for 161 yards, highlighted by a 64-yard TD.
- Terry Bradshaw threw for 209 yards and two touchdowns in the win.
- The Steelers' Roy Gerela kicked two fourth-quarter field goals and Reggie Harrison blocked a punt for a safety.
- Glen Edwards' end zone interception on the final play preserved the win.

SUPER BOWL XI

Oakland 32, Minnesota 14
January 9, 1977
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Fred Biletnikoff (WR), Oakland

- Biletnikoff made four key catches and finished with 79 receiving yards.
- The Raiders' Clarence Davis rushed for 137 yards and Pete Banaszak scored twice on short runs.
- Oakland scored on three straight possessions to lead, 16-0, at halftime.
- Willie Brown's 75-yard interception return for a TD sealed the win.

SUPER BOWL XII

Dallas 27, Denver 10
January 15, 1978
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVPs: Randy White (DT) and Harvey Martin (DE), Dallas

- White and Martin were part of a defensive effort that produced eight turnovers (4 fumbles,4 interceptions).
- Butch Johnson's diving 47-yard TD catch put the Cowboys ahead, 20-3.
- Dallas RB Robert Newhouse closed out the scoring by throwing a 29-yard touchdown pass to Golden Richards.

SUPER BOWL XIII

Pittsburgh 35, Dallas 31
January 21, 1979
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Pittsburgh

- Bradshaw completed 17 of 30 passes for 318 yards and four touchdowns.
- John Stallworth caught two first-half TDs, helping the Steelers lead, 21-14.
- Rocky Bleier had a TD and recovered an onside kick to clinch the win after Dallas had cut into a 35-17 deficit.
- Pittsburgh became the first team to capture three Super Bowl titles.

SUPER BOWL XIV

Pittsburgh 31, L.A. Rams 19
January 20, 1980
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Pittsburgh

- Bradshaw completed 14 of 21 passes for 309 yards, including a go-ahead 73-yard TD to John Stallworth.
- Lynn Swann had a 47-yard TD catch.
- Pittsburgh was behind, 13-10, at halftime, and still trailed, 19-17, entering the fourth quarter.
- The crowd of 103,985 set a Super Bowl record for attendance.

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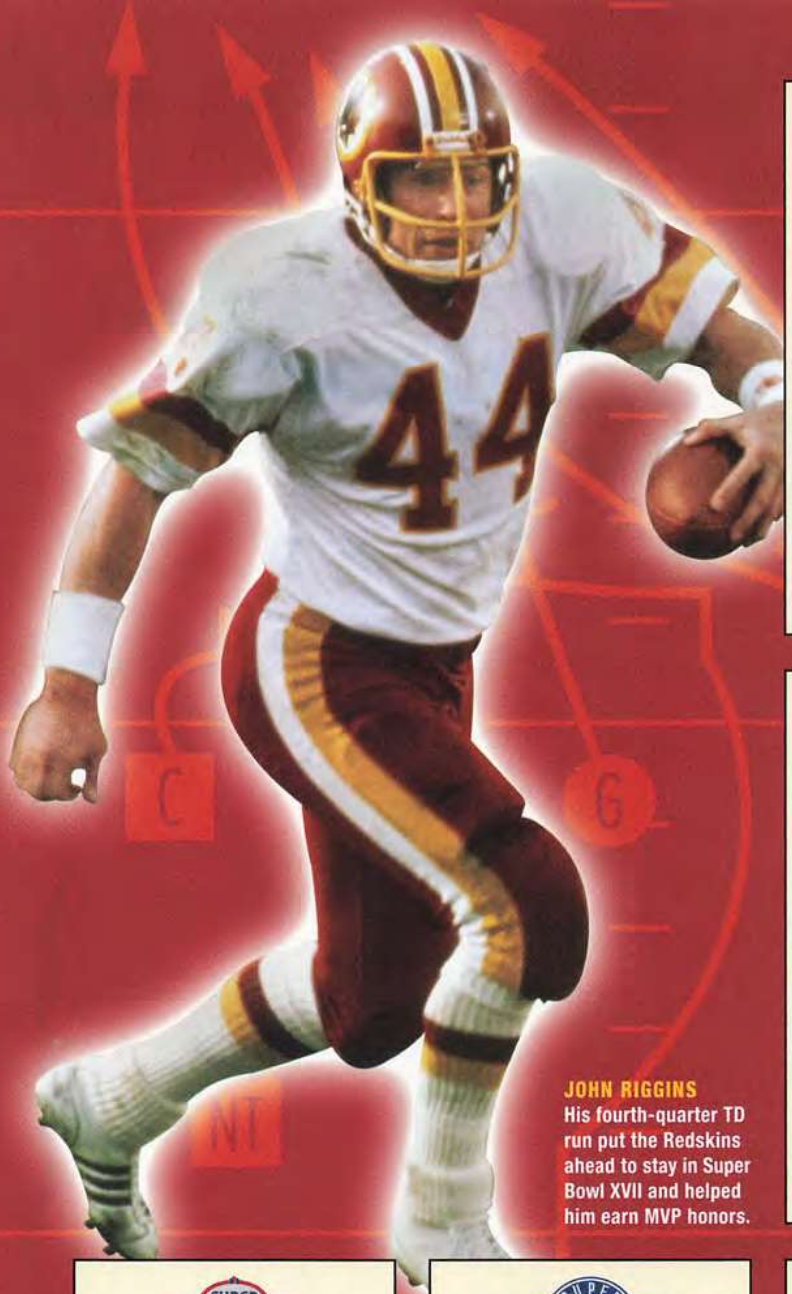

JOHN RIGGINS
His fourth-quarter TD run put the Redskins ahead to stay in Super Bowl XVII and helped him earn MVP honors.

Al Messerschmidt/WireImage/Getty Images

SUPER BOWL XV

Oakland 27, Philadelphia 10
January 25, 1981
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Jim Plunkett (QB), Oakland

- Plunkett (13 of 21, 261 yards) had three touchdown passes, including an 80-yard throw to Kenny King that made it 14-0 late in the first quarter.
- Rod Martin's three interceptions set a Super Bowl record, and Mark van Eeghen rushed for 75 yards.
- The Raiders became the first Wild Card team to win the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL XVI

San Francisco 26, Cincinnati 21
January 24, 1982
Silverdome (Pontiac, MI)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana (14 of 22, 157 yards) threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to Earl Cooper and ran for a 1-yard score.
- Ray Wersching kicked four FGs, including two in the fourth quarter after Cincinnati pulled within 20-14.
- The Bengals became the first team to outgain their opponent (356 yards to 275) and lose the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL XVII

Washington 27, Miami 17
January 30, 1983
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: John Riggins (RB), Washington

- Riggins rushed for 166 yards, and his 43-yard TD run in the fourth quarter gave Washington the lead.
- Joe Theismann (15 of 23, 143 yards) threw TD passes to Alvin Garrett and Charlie Brown in the victory.
- Miami was held to 176 total yards.
- Washington captured its first NFL title since 1942.

SUPER BOWL XVIII

L.A. Raiders 38, Washington 9
January 22, 1984
Tampa Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Marcus Allen (RB), Los Angeles

- Allen rushed for 191 yards and scored on TD runs of 5 and 74 yards.
- Oakland's Derrick Jensen recovered a blocked punt for the game's first score, and Jack Squirek returned an interception 5 yards for a TD.
- Jim Plunkett completed 16 of 25 passes for 172 yards and one TD, a 12-yard throw to Cliff Branch.

SUPER BOWL XIX

San Francisco 38, Miami 16
January 20, 1985
Stanford Stadium (Stanford, CA)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana threw for 331 yards and three touchdowns; he also rushed for 59 yards, including a 6-yard TD.
- Roger Craig became the first player to score three TDs in a Super Bowl.
- Miami led, 10-7, before San Francisco took control, 28-16, at the half.
- The 49ers gained 537 total yards and had the ball for more than 37 minutes.

SUPER BOWL XX

Chicago 46, New England 10
January 26, 1986
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Richard Dent (DE), Chicago

- Dent had 1.5 sacks and helped limit New England to 123 total yards.
- Jim McMahon became the first QB to run for two TDs in a Super Bowl.
- Walter Payton had 61 rushing yards.
- Chicago posted seven sacks.
- The Bears captured their first NFL championship since 1963.

SUPER BOWL XXI

N.Y. Giants 39, Denver 20
January 25, 1987
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Phil Simms (QB), New York

- Simms completed 22 of 25 passes for 268 yards and three touchdowns.
- The Giants had trailed, 10-9, before scoring 30 points in the second half.
- Mark Bavaro's 13-yard TD catch gave New York the lead for good.
- Joe Morris rushed for 67 yards.
- N.Y. won its first NFL title since 1956.

SUPER BOWL XXII

Washington 42, Denver 10
January 31, 1988
Jack Murphy Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Doug Williams (QB), Washington

- Williams (18 of 29, 340 yards, 4 TDs) became the first African-American QB to play in an NFL title game.
- Trailing 10-0, Washington scored TDs on five straight second-quarter possessions to take control.
- Ricky Sanders caught 80-yard and 50-yard touchdown passes.
- Timmy Smith rushed for 204 yards.

XV XVI XVII XVIII XIX XX XXI XXII

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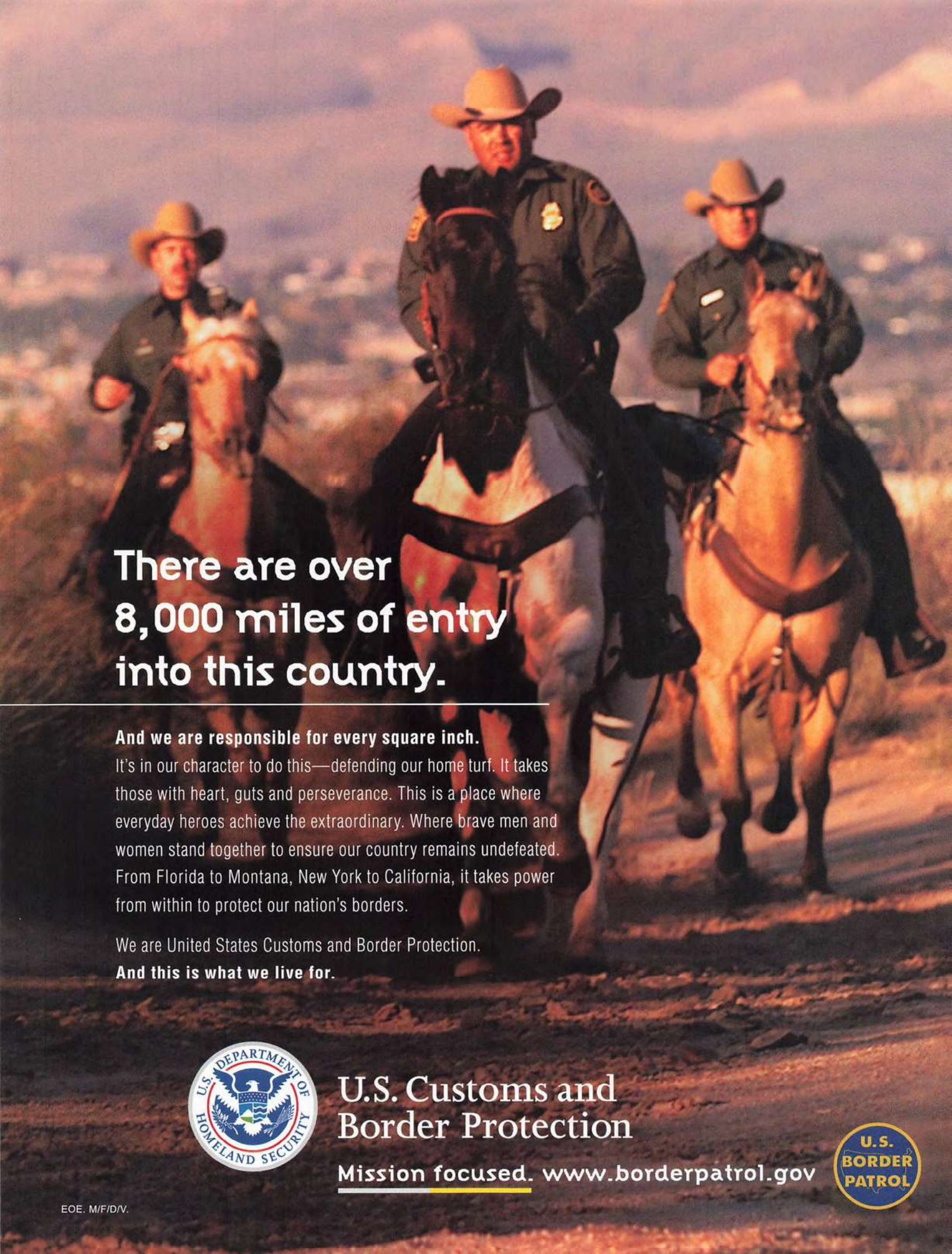
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San Francisco 20, Cincinnati 16

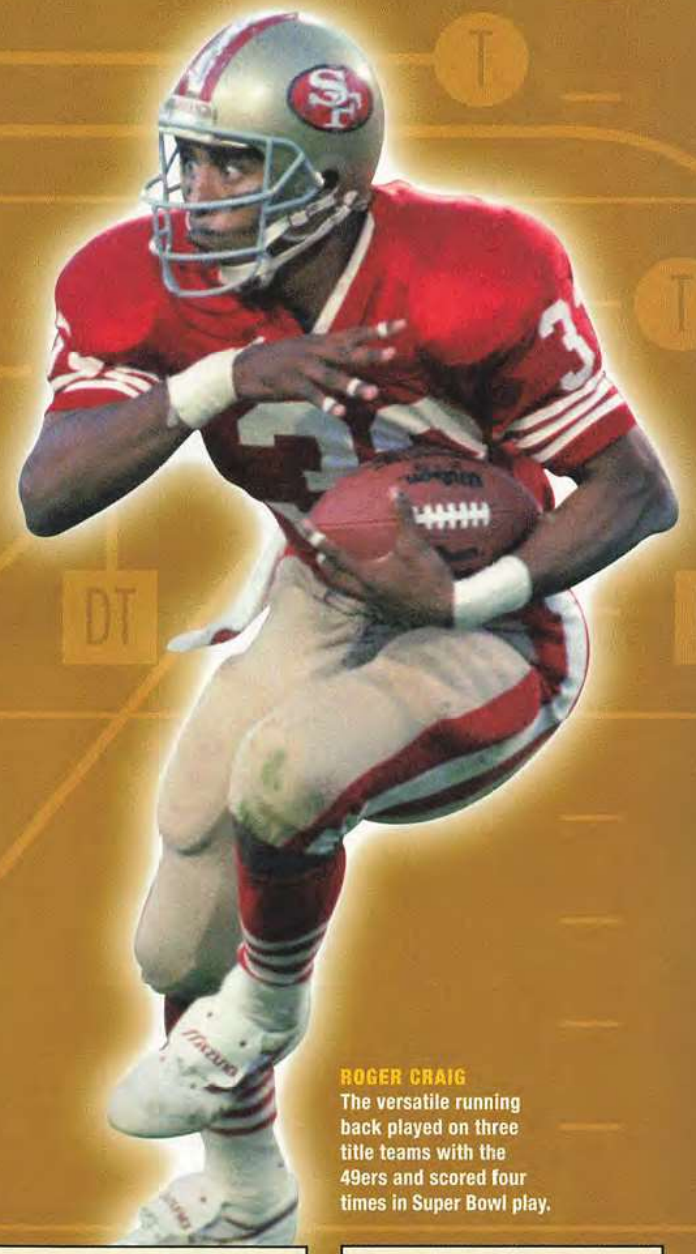
January 22, 1989
Joe Robbie Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: Jerry Rice (WR), San Francisco

- Rice caught 11 passes for 215 yards, including a 14-yard touchdown.
- Joe Montana's 10-yard TD pass to John Taylor with 34 seconds to play lifted the 49ers to victory.
- The Bengals had taken a 16-13 lead on Jim Breech's 40-yard field goal.
- Montana finished with 357 passing yards and two touchdowns.

San Francisco 55, Denver 10

January 28, 1990
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana became the Super Bowl's first three-time MVP after completing 22 of 29 passes for 297 yards and five touchdowns.
- Jerry Rice caught seven passes for 148 yards and three touchdowns.
- San Francisco held Denver to 12 first downs and 167 total yards, while its 55 points set a Super Bowl record.



ROGER CRAIG
The versatile running back played on three title teams with the 49ers and scored four times in Super Bowl play.

N.Y. Giants 20, Buffalo 19

January 27, 1991
Tampa Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Ottis Anderson (RB), New York

- Anderson rushed 21 times for 102 yards and one touchdown.
- Thurman Thomas' 31-yard TD run had given Buffalo a 19-17 lead, before Matt Bahr's 21-yard field goal put the Giants ahead for good.
- Jeff Hostetler (20 of 32, 222 yards) helped New York set a Super Bowl mark for time of possession (40:33).

Washington 37, Buffalo 24

January 26, 1992
Metrodome (Minneapolis, MN)
MVP: Mark Rypien (QB), Washington

- Rypien completed 18 of 33 passes for 292 yards and two touchdowns.
- Washington held a 24-0 lead after Gerald Riggs scored his second TD of the game on a 2-yard run.
- Buffalo pulled within 24-10 before Gary Clark's 30-yard TD reception and two Chip Lohmiller field goals.
- The Redskins intercepted four passes.

Dallas 52, Buffalo 17

January 31, 1993
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Troy Aikman (QB), Dallas

- Aikman completed 22 of 30 passes for 273 yards and four touchdowns.
- Dallas' defense forced nine turnovers.
- The Cowboys led, 28-10, at the half after Michael Irvin caught 19-yard and 18-yard TDs 18 seconds apart.
- Buffalo pulled within 31-17 before Dallas scored three touchdowns in a 2:33 span of the fourth quarter.

Dallas 30, Buffalo 13

January 30, 1994
Georgia Dome (Atlanta, GA)
MVP: Emmitt Smith (RB), Dallas

- Smith rushed for 132 yards and scored two second-half touchdowns.
- Buffalo led, 13-6, at the half on Thurman Thomas' TD run and a pair of Steve Christie field goals.
- James Washington's 46-yard fumble return for a TD tied the game.
- Dallas became first team to start 0-2 and go on to win the Super Bowl.

San Francisco 49, San Diego 26

January 29, 1995
Joe Robbie Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: Steve Young (QB), San Francisco

- Young passed for 325 yards and threw a Super Bowl-record six TDs.
- Both Ricky Watters and Jerry Rice scored three times in the win. Rice finished the game with 10 catches.
- The teams combined for 75 points, setting a Super Bowl record.
- San Francisco became the first team to win five Super Bowl crowns.

Dallas 27, Pittsburgh 17

January 28, 1996
Sun Devil Stadium (Tempe, AZ)
MVP: Larry Brown (CB), Dallas

- Brown had two interceptions that led to 14 Cowboys points.
- After Brown's second pickoff, Emmitt Smith's 4-yard TD run made it 27-17.
- Troy Aikman completed 15 of 23 passes for 209 yards.
- Dallas was making its eighth Super Bowl appearance, and DE/LB Charles Haley won his fifth Super Bowl ring.

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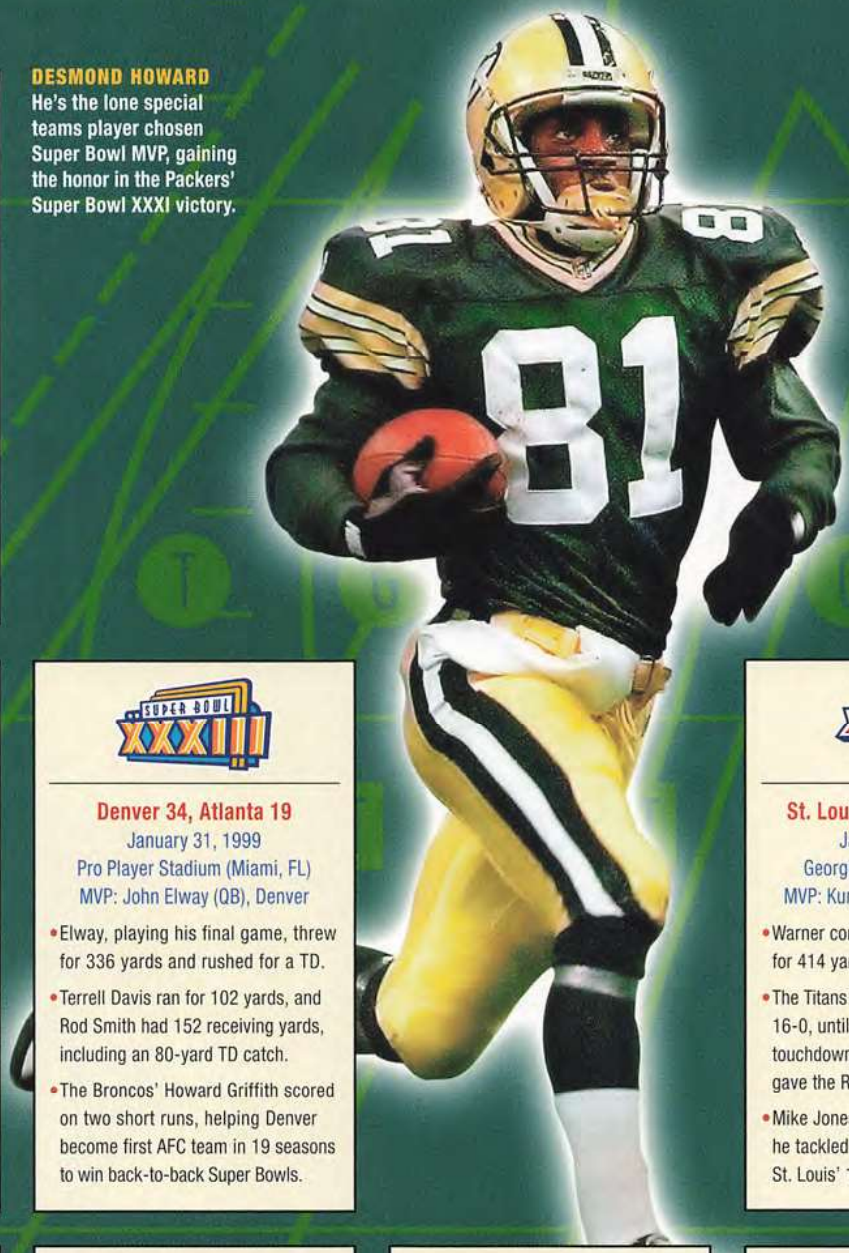

Elise Amendola/AP WWP

DESMOND HOWARD
He's the lone special teams player chosen Super Bowl MVP, gaining the honor in the Packers' Super Bowl XXXI victory.

Green Bay 35, New England 21
January 26, 1997
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Desmond Howard (KR-PR), G.B.

- Howard had a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and finished the game with 244 total return yards.
- Before Howard's return, the Patriots had pulled within 27-21 on Curtis Martin's 18-yard touchdown run.
- Reggie White set a Super Bowl record with three sacks, and Green Bay's defense had four interceptions.

Denver 31, Green Bay 24
January 25, 1998
Qualcomm Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Terrell Davis (RB), Denver

- Davis ran for 157 yards and set a Super Bowl record by rushing for three TDs, all on 1-yard runs.
- Davis' final touchdown, with 1:45 remaining, snapped a 24-24 tie.
- John Elway (12 of 22, 123 yards) ran for a TD that put Denver ahead, 14-7.
- The Broncos snapped the NFC's Super Bowl win streak at 13 games.

Denver 34, Atlanta 19
January 31, 1999
Pro Player Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: John Elway (QB), Denver

- Elway, playing his final game, threw for 336 yards and rushed for a TD.
- Terrell Davis ran for 102 yards, and Rod Smith had 152 receiving yards, including an 80-yard TD catch.
- The Broncos' Howard Griffith scored on two short runs, helping Denver become first AFC team in 19 seasons to win back-to-back Super Bowls.

St. Louis 23, Tennessee 16
January 30, 2000
Georgia Dome (Atlanta, GA)
MVP: Kurt Warner (QB), St. Louis

- Warner completed 24 of 45 passes for 414 yards and a pair of TDs.
- The Titans tied the game after trailing, 16-0, until Isaac Bruce's 73-yard touchdown catch with 1:54 to play gave the Rams the lead for good.
- Mike Jones preserved the win when he tackled the Titans' Kevin Dyson at St. Louis' 1-yard line as time expired.

Baltimore 34, N.Y. Giants 7
January 28, 2001
Raymond James Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Ray Lewis (LB), Baltimore

- Lewis helped force five turnovers and kept New York's offense from scoring.
- Brandon Stokley's 38-yard TD catch from Trent Dilfer made it 7-0.
- The teams combined for three TDs in a span of 36 seconds, which included back-to-back kickoff returns by the Giants' Ron Dixon (97 yards) and the Ravens' Jermaine Lewis (84 yards).

New England 20, St. Louis 17
February 3, 2002
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Tom Brady (QB), New England

- Brady completed 16 of 27 passes for 145 yards and one touchdown.
- Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard field goal as time expired gave the Patriots the victory, making it the first Super Bowl won on the final play.
- Although the Rams had more total yards, 427-267, New England forced three turnovers that led to 17 points.

Tampa Bay 48, Oakland 21
January 26, 2003
Qualcomm Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Dexter Jackson (S), Tampa Bay

- Jackson grabbed the first two of Tampa Bay's five interceptions.
- The Buccaneers returned three interceptions for touchdowns—two by Dwight Smith and a third by Derrick Brooks.
- This was the first time the NFL's top offense (Oakland) and top defense (Tampa) had met in the Super Bowl.

New England 32, Carolina 29
February 1, 2004
Reliant Stadium (Houston, TX)
MVP: Tom Brady (QB), New England

- Brady completed 32 of 48 passes for 354 yards and three touchdowns.
- Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard FG with four seconds left snapped a 29-29 tie and capped a fourth quarter that saw a Super Bowl-record 37 points scored.
- Carolina's Jake Delhomme threw three touchdown passes, including an 85-yarder to Muhsin Muhammad.

XXXI XXXII XXXIII XXXIV XXXV XXXVI XXXVII XXXVIII

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New England 24, Philadelphia 21
February 6, 2005
ALLTEL Stadium (Jacksonville, FL)
MVP: Deion Branch (WR), New England

- Branch had 11 catches for 133 yards as New England won its third Super Bowl in four seasons.
- Tom Brady completed 23 of 33 passes for 236 yards and two touchdowns.
- Corey Dillon's 2-yard touchdown run with 13:44 to play broke a 14-14 tie.
- The second of Rodney Harrison's two interceptions sealed the Patriots' win.

Pittsburgh 21, Seattle 10
February 5, 2006
Ford Field (Detroit, MI)
MVP: Hines Ward (WR), Pittsburgh

- Ward finished with five catches for 123 yards, including a 43-yard TD on a pass from Antwaan Randle El.
- Willie Parker's 75-yard TD run, the longest in Super Bowl history, gave the Steelers a 14-3 lead.
- Pittsburgh became the third team to win five Super Bowl titles, joining the Cowboys and the 49ers.

Indianapolis 29, Chicago 17
February 4, 2007
Dolphin Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: Peyton Manning (QB), Indianapolis

- Manning completed 25 of 38 passes for 247 yards and a touchdown.
- Dominic Rhodes rushed for 113 yards and scored the go-ahead TD on a 1-yard run in the second quarter.
- The Colts' Tony Dungy and Chicago's Lovie Smith became the first two African-American head coaches to lead their teams to the Super Bowl.

XXXIX

XL

XLI

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS (1920-1969)

Until a playoff system was instituted, the NFL champion was determined by best regular-season record. And from 1966 until the merger in 1970, the NFL and AFL held their own championship games prior to the Super Bowl.

NFL CHAMPIONS

1920 Akron Pros
1921 Chicago Staleys
1922 Canton Bulldogs
1923 Canton Bulldogs
1924 Cleveland Bulldogs
1925 Chicago Cardinals
1926 Frankfort Yellow Jackets
1927 New York Giants
1928 Providence Steam Roller
1929 Green Bay Packers
1930 Green Bay Packers
1931 Green Bay Packers
1932 @ Chicago Bears 9, Portsmouth Spartans 0
1933 @ Chicago Bears 23, New York Giants 21
1934 @ New York Giants 30, Chicago Bears 13
1935 @ Detroit Lions 26, New York Giants 7
1936 Green Bay Packers 21, Boston Braves 6*
1937 Washington Redskins 28, @ Chicago Bears 21
1938 @ New York Giants 23, Green Bay Packers 17
1939 @ Green Bay Packers 27, New York Giants 0
1940 Chicago Bears 73, @ Washington Redskins 0
1941 @ Chicago Bears 37, New York Giants 9
1942 @ Washington Redskins 14, Chicago Bears 6
1943 @ Chicago Bears 41, Washington Redskins 21
1944 Green Bay Packers 14, @ New York Giants 7
1945 @ Cleveland Rams 15, Washington Redskins 14
1946 Chicago Bears 24, @ New York Giants 14
1947 @ Chicago Cardinals 28, Philadelphia Eagles 21
1948 @ Philadelphia Eagles 7, Chicago Cardinals 0
1949 Philadelphia Eagles 14, @ Los Angeles Rams 0
1950 @ Cleveland Browns 30, Los Angeles Rams 28
1951 @ Los Angeles Rams 24, Cleveland Browns 17
1952 Detroit Lions 17, @ Cleveland Browns 7
1953 @ Detroit Lions 17, Cleveland Browns 16
1954 @ Cleveland Browns 56, Detroit Lions 10
1955 Cleveland Browns 38, @ Los Angeles Rams 14
1956 @ New York Giants 47, Chicago Bears 7
1957 @ Detroit Lions 59, Cleveland Browns 14
1958 Baltimore Colts 23, @ New York Giants 17 (OT)
1959 @ Baltimore Colts 31, New York Giants 16
1960 @ Philadelphia Eagles 17, Green Bay Packers 13
1961 @ Green Bay Packers 37, New York Giants 0
1962 Green Bay Packers 16, @ New York Giants 7
1963 @ Chicago Bears 14, New York Giants 10
1964 @ Cleveland Browns 27, Baltimore Colts 0
1965 @ Green Bay Packers 23, Cleveland Browns 12
1966 Green Bay Packers 34, @ Dallas Cowboys 27
1967 @ Green Bay Packers 21, Dallas Cowboys 17
1968 Baltimore Colts 34, @ Cleveland Browns 0
1969 @ Minnesota Vikings 27, Cleveland Browns 7

AFL CHAMPIONS

1960 @ Houston Oilers 24, Los Angeles Chargers 15
1961 Houston Oilers 10, @ San Diego Chargers 3
1962 Dallas Texans 20, @ Houston Oilers 17 (OT)
1963 @ San Diego Chargers 51, Boston Patriots 10
1964 @ Buffalo Bills 20, San Diego Chargers 7
1965 Buffalo Bills 23, @ San Diego Chargers 0
1966 Kansas City Chiefs 31, @ Buffalo Bills 7
1967 @ Oakland Raiders 40, Houston Oilers 7
1968 @ New York Jets 27, Oakland Raiders 23
1969 Kansas City Chiefs 17, @ Oakland Raiders 7

**Polo Grounds*

Jimmy DeFlippi/US Presswire

PEYTON MANNING
His MVP performance last February at Dolphin Stadium helped the Colts earn their first Super Bowl title in 36 years.

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The Games Before THE GAME

Bart Starr (No. 15) crosses the goal line for the go-ahead TD in Green Bay's 1967 playoff win over Dallas, a game that became known as the "Ice Bowl."

Joseph Addai scores the touchdown that capped the Colts' rally to beat New England in last year's AFC Championship Game.

Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

THROUGH THE YEARS, THE NFL'S PENULTIMATE CONTESTS HAVE DELIVERED THEIR OWN SHARE OF THRILLS.

by Jim Trotter

The Super Bowl is the grandest sporting event on the planet, but there are times when even it is upstaged by the games immediately preceding it.

Look only as far back as last year. For all the storylines conjured up by the Colts and Bears in Super Bowl XLI, the playoff contest that will forever be etched in our minds is the AFC Championship Game when Indianapolis rallied past the Patriots. It was, as the saying goes, one for the ages. So was the Packers-Cowboys "Ice Bowl," which this season celebrates its 40th anniversary.

There have been many others in between: both conference finals following the 1981 regular season; Denver's back-to-back AFC title game victories against Cleveland; and the Falcons' overtime shocker in the 1998 NFC Championship Game, when they beat a powerhouse Minnesota team that had lost just once all season.

On occasion, the conference championship will bring together what are arguably the league's top two teams. Emmitt Smith, the NFL's all-time leading rusher who won three Super Bowls with the Cowboys, admits he and his teammates often viewed the NFC final as the marquee match-up on their postseason schedule.

"We were in the league at a time when [our conference] was dominant," says Smith, noting the NFC's stretch of 15 victories in 16 Super Bowls during the 1980s and '90s. "You had [great teams like] the 49ers, the Redskins, the Cowboys, and the Packers. Winning the NFC Championship Game was like getting a [hall] pass to win the Super Bowl."

Adding a layer of intrigue is that conference title games take place at home sites, instead of on neutral ground, allowing both crowd and weather to become factors. No matter the reasons, these games have delivered some of the most entertaining, compelling, and lasting moments in NFL history. Enjoy this look at a few that stand above the rest.

Pro Football Hall of Fame/Wire Image/Getty Images

PACKERS 21 COWBOYS 17

(Dec. 31, 1967) OK, so this one actually was "the game" since no one knew what to make of the Super Bowl quite yet. Stamped in NFL annals as the "Ice Bowl" because the game-time temperature stood at minus-13 degrees, conditions were so harsh that Lambeau Field's new heating system malfunctioned, leaving the playing surface hard and slick. But the legend of the game extends beyond the weather. It matched two head coaches who became larger than life figures—the Packers' Vince Lombardi and the Cowboys' Tom Landry—and two franchises recognized as pillars of the league.

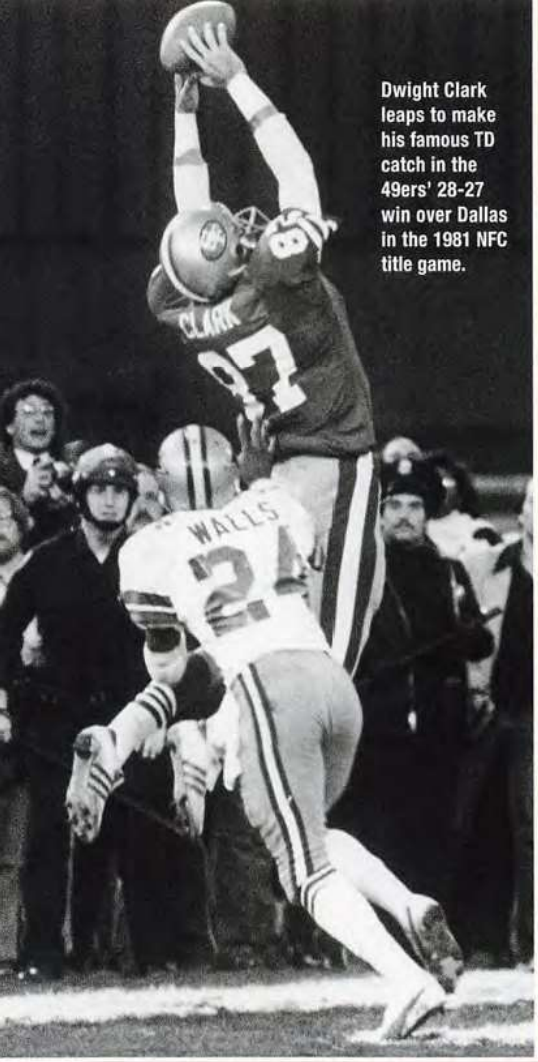
The Packers jumped in front, 14-0, on a pair of Bart Starr touchdown passes, but the Cowboys countered with 17 straight points and held the lead with less than five minutes to go. That set the stage for Starr, who directed a long drive deep into Dallas territory. The Cowboys, despite having their backs against the goal line, viewed it as a perfect opportunity for payback. In the previous year's title game, they lost after being stopped on four straight plays from the Green Bay 2.

Dallas' defense rose up initially, stuffing Donny Anderson on back-to-back carries. With 16 seconds on the clock and the ball less than a yard from the end zone, the Packers called their last timeout, then boldly elected to try another running play instead of a pass or a game-tying field goal. It was an all-or-nothing gamble, but behind the blocks of center Ken Bowman and guard Jerry Kramer, Starr dove into the end zone for the go-ahead score.

The Packers then thawed out in time to beat the AFL champion Raiders in Super Bowl II.

49ERS 28 COWBOYS 27

(Jan. 10, 1982) In Bay-area football lore, the play will forever be remembered as "The Catch." Just 51 seconds remained in the NFC title game and the host 49ers trailed Dallas by six points. San Francisco QB Joe Montana took the snap at the Cowboys 6-yard line, retreated to his right to buy extra time against a strong rush, then, throwing off his back foot, floated a pass to the back corner of the end zone. Most people thought he was throwing the ball away, until wide receiver Dwight Clark appeared out of nowhere and leaped in front of Dallas cornerback Everson Walls to make the go-ahead touchdown reception.



Dwight Clark leaps to make his famous TD catch in the 49ers' 28-27 win over Dallas in the 1981 NFC title game.

Bruce Bennett Studios/Getty Images

That TD marked the sixth and final lead change in a gripping back-and-forth affair. Minutes earlier, Dallas had taken a 27-21 advantage on Doug Cosbie's 21-yard catch.

San Francisco then secured the victory when Jim Stuckey pounced on a Dallas fumble. Moving on to face the Bengals in Super Bowl XVI, the 49ers prevailed, 26-21, marking their first of five Super Bowl titles in 14 years.

Bengals 27 Chargers 7

(Jan. 10, 1982) Green Bay has its "Ice Bowl," but Cincinnati can claim the "Freezer Bowl." The Bengals hosted the Chargers in brutal conditions at Riverfront Stadium, the temperature sitting at minus-9 at kickoff and the wind chill plummeting to negative 59. San Diego tight end Kellen Winslow would describe the weather as "inhumane" and insists he still has physical ailments from that day.

The Chargers looked every bit the warm-weather club, committing four turnovers. Two of those led to first-half touchdowns—Ken Anderson's 8-yard pass to M.L. Harris and Pete Johnson's 1-yard run—aiding the Bengals, who earned their first trip to the Super Bowl.

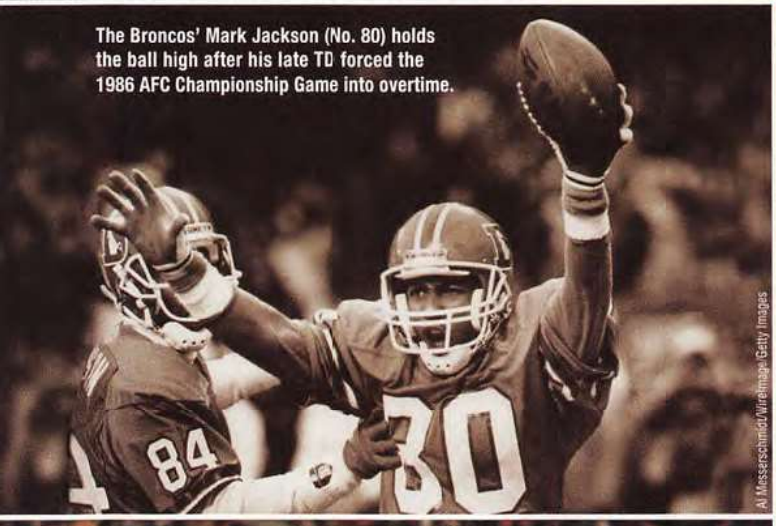
Broncos 23 Browns 20 (OT)

(Jan. 11, 1987) This game has gained its place in postseason memoirs because of "The Drive," the 98-yard, touchdown-producing march capped by John Elway's 5-yard pass to Mark Jackson with 37 seconds to go in regulation.

That catch tied the game at 20-20 and silenced Cleveland's normally raucous "Dawg Pound." In the extra period, Rich Karlis kicked a 33-yard field goal to send Denver to Super Bowl XXI, where they lost to the Giants.

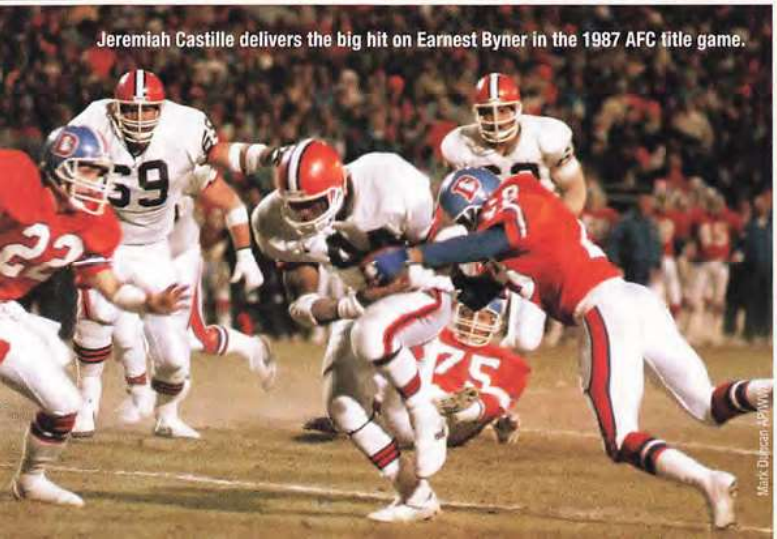
Broncos 38 Browns 33

(Jan. 17, 1988) If the previous year produced "The Drive," this game ended with "The Fumble." Denver led by seven with 1:05 to play, but Earnest Byner—who had already scored twice to help rally the Browns from a 21-3 deficit—appeared headed for the game-tying touchdown. Just before reaching the goal line, however, he was hit hard by cornerback Jeremiah Castille, who stripped the ball and then fell on the fumble. The play preserved the win and assured Denver of its second straight AFC title and a trip to Super Bowl XXII.



The Broncos' Mark Jackson (No. 80) holds the ball high after his late TD forced the 1986 AFC Championship Game into overtime.

Al Messerschmidt/Wirelmage/Getty Images



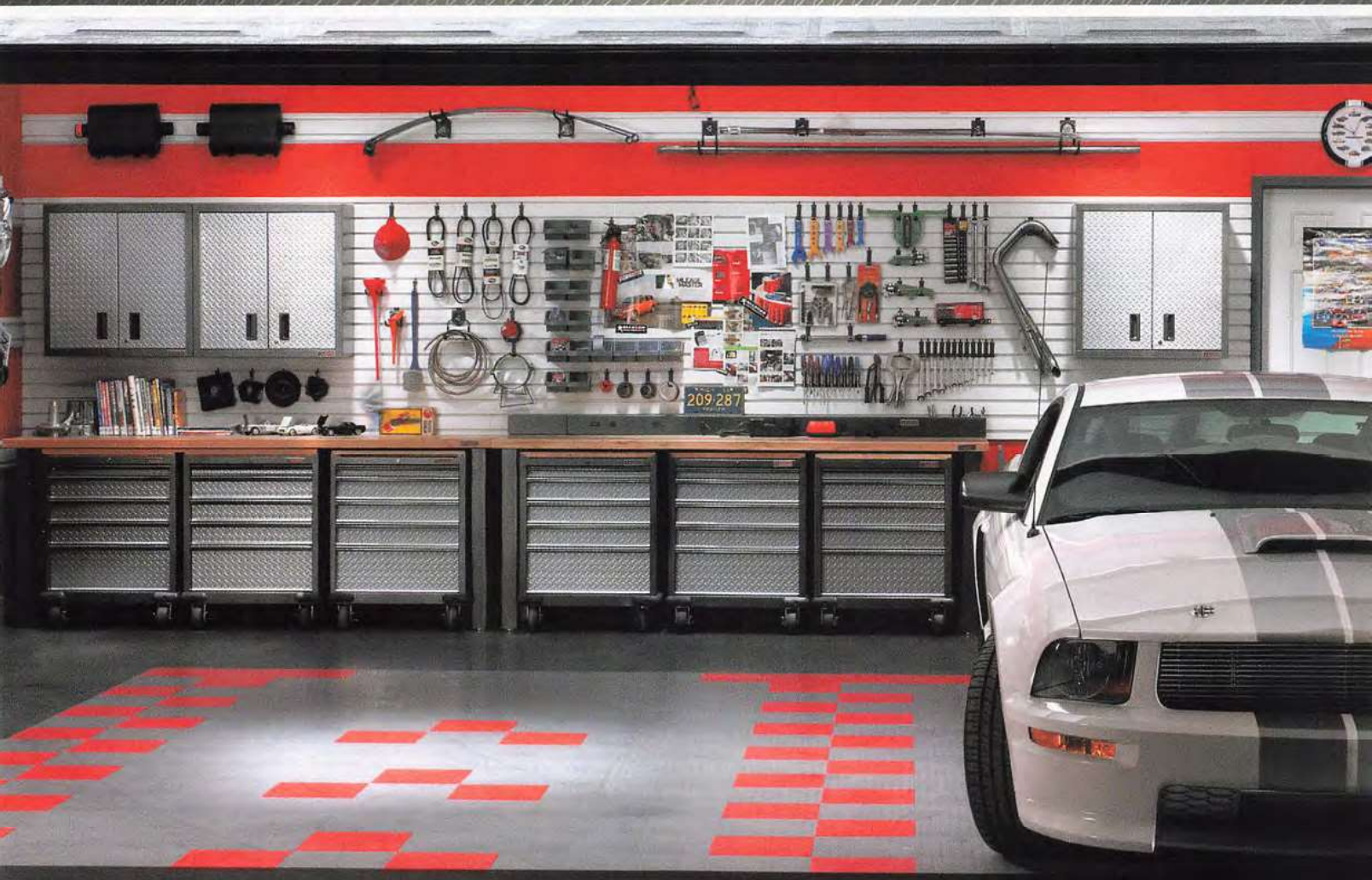
Jeremiah Castille delivers the big hit on Earnest Byner in the 1987 AFC title game.

Mark Duncan AP Photo

AFC-NFC Championship Game Standings

(Super Bowl era entering 2007 season)

Franchise	Conf.	W	L	Pct.	PF	PA
New York Giants	NFC	3	0	1.000	73	13
Cincinnati Bengals	AFC	2	0	1.000	48	17
Baltimore Ravens	AFC	1	0	1.000	16	3
New England Patriots	AFC	5	1	.833	174	116
Washington Redskins	NFC	5	1	.833	139	78
Green Bay Packers	NFC	4	1	.800	135	105
Denver Broncos	AFC	6	2	.750	189	166
Miami Dolphins	AFC	5	2	.714	152	115
Buffalo Bills	AFC	4	2	.667	137	85
Kansas City Chiefs	AFC	2	1	.667	61	44
Dallas Cowboys	NFC	8	8	.500	361	319
Minnesota Vikings	NFC	4	4	.500	135	151
Indianapolis Colts	AFC/NFC	3	3	.500	129	116
Chicago Bears	NFC	2	2	.500	66	65
Atlanta Falcons	NFC	1	1	.500	40	54
Seattle Seahawks	AFC/NFC	1	1	.500	48	44
Pittsburgh Steelers	AFC	6	7	.462	285	270
San Francisco 49ers	NFC	5	7	.416	245	222
Philadelphia Eagles	NFC	2	3	.400	84	87
Oakland Raiders	AFC	5	9	.357	272	304
St. Louis Rams	NFC	3	6	.333	82	187
Carolina Panthers	NFC	1	2	.333	41	67
New York Jets	AFC	1	2	.333	37	60
San Diego Chargers	AFC	1	2	.333	51	74
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	NFC	1	2	.333	33	30
Tennessee Titans	AFC	1	4	.200	82	156
Detroit Lions	NFC	0	1	.000	10	41
New Orleans Saints	NFC	0	1	.000	14	39
Jacksonville Jaguars	AFC	0	2	.000	20	53
Cleveland Browns	AFC/NFC	0	5	.000	81	159



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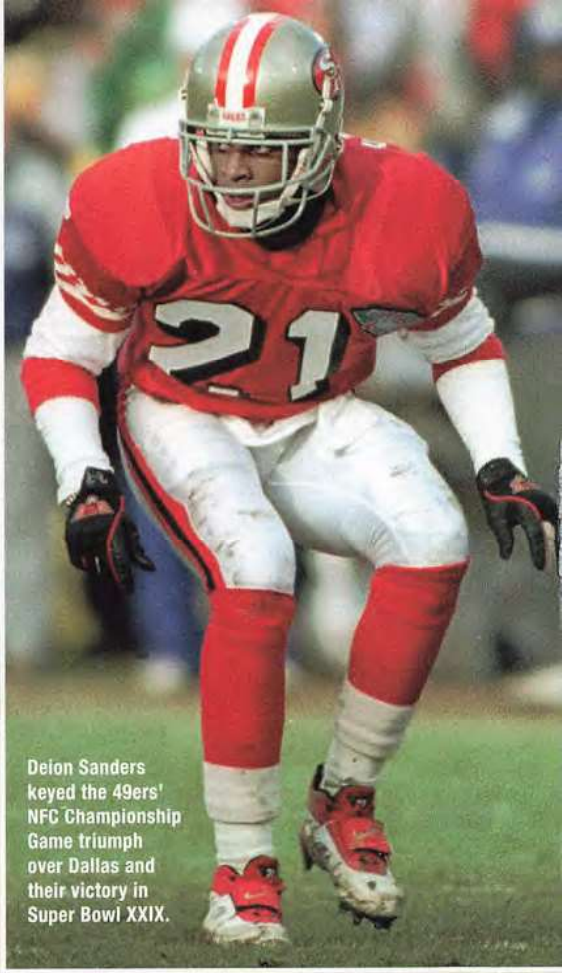
IT'S TIME TO RETHINK THE GARAGE.®

Atlanta's Morten Andersen (left) celebrates with coach Dan Reeves after kicking the field goal that beat the Vikings in the 1998 NFC title game.

Jeff Haynes/Getty Images



Deion Sanders keyed the 49ers' NFC Championship Game triumph over Dallas and their victory in Super Bowl XXIX.

Bob Galbraith/AP WWP

GIANTS 15 49ERS 13

(Jan. 20, 1991) San Francisco was seeking to become the first team to win three straight Super Bowls and was about to get its shot until halfback Roger Craig fumbled the ball with 2:36 to go. Lawrence Taylor made the recovery, a turnover that set up Matt Bahr's fifth—and most important—field goal, a 42-yarder at the final gun that put the Giants in Super Bowl XXV, where they defeated the Bills.

COWBOYS 30 49ERS 20

(Jan. 17, 1993) San Francisco had won four Super Bowls in the 1980s with Joe Montana at quarterback, and now wanted to establish its dominance in the '90s with Steve Young behind center. Young had guided the 49ers to a 14-2 regular-season mark and was poised to take his team to the big game, but along came a 13-3 Dallas squad that featured fiery head coach Jimmy Johnson and plenty of attitude. The Cowboys' defense collected four takeaways, while quarterback Troy Aikman threw for 322 yards and Emmitt Smith ran for 114 yards, to engineer this road win.

In Super Bowl XXVII, Dallas beat Buffalo for its first of three titles in a four-year span.

49ERS 38 COWBOYS 28

(Jan. 15, 1995) By this point, the Cowboys vs. 49ers rivalry had attained Ali-Frazier status. This marked the third consecutive year the teams were facing off in the conference final, and the pressure was clearly on San Francisco, which had dropped the previous two meetings. The 49ers sought to overtake the two-time defending Super Bowl champs by signing a number of free agents, notable among them cornerback Deion Sanders, whose playmaking and swagger were sorely needed. The 49ers capitalized on three first-quarter takeaways, turning each one into a touchdown while building a 31-14 halftime lead.

Two weeks later, the 49ers routed San Diego in Super Bowl XXIX for their fifth title.

FALCONS 30 VIKINGS 27 (OT)

(Jan. 17, 1999) Although Atlanta had captured the NFC West with an impressive 14-2 mark, the Vikings came into this game a prohibitive favorite. And with good reason. Minnesota had finished the regular season at 15-1—matching San Francisco (1984) and Chicago (1985) for most wins in a season—and its nine home victories were by an average of 23 points. Yet when the Vikings had the chance to put away the Falcons with two minutes to go in regulation, Gary Anderson (who had made 44 straight field goal attempts) misfired on a 38-yard kick, leaving things tied and sending the game into overtime. Atlanta seized on the opportunity. The Falcons drove 70 yards in seven plays to set up Morten Andersen's game-winning 38-yard field goal.

It marked the first time in NFL history that a 15-win team failed to capture the conference championship as well. Atlanta would fall to Denver, 34-19, in Super Bowl XXXIII.

COLTS 38 PATRIOTS 34

(Jan. 21, 2007) This one was memorable on many levels. First, Indianapolis overcame a 21-3 first-half deficit, making it the largest comeback in a conference final in NFL history. Second, the win came against the team that had knocked the Colts out of the playoffs in two of the previous three seasons. Third, it ended any talk that quarterback Peyton Manning could not win the "big game," an notion he further dispelled two weeks later by being named MVP of the Colts' Super Bowl XLI win over the Chicago Bears. And finally, it came at home, where long-suffering Colts fans could celebrate into the night.

The crucial swing occurred with the Patriots ahead, 34-31, late in the fourth quarter. After a big stop by the Indianapolis defense, Manning engineered an 80-yard drive culminated by Joseph Addai's 3-yard touchdown run with one minute to play. It gave the Colts their only lead of the game and the only one they would need, as Marlin Jackson preserved the win by picking off Tom Brady in the final seconds.

Jim Trotter is a senior writer for Sports Illustrated *and previously covered the NFL for* The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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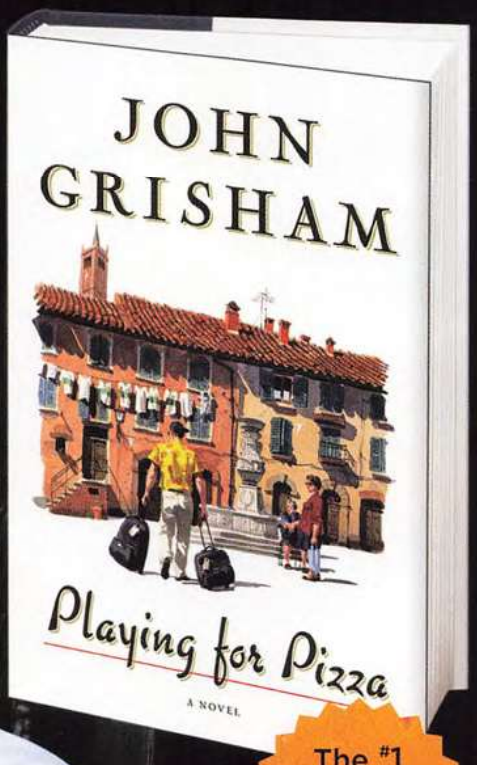

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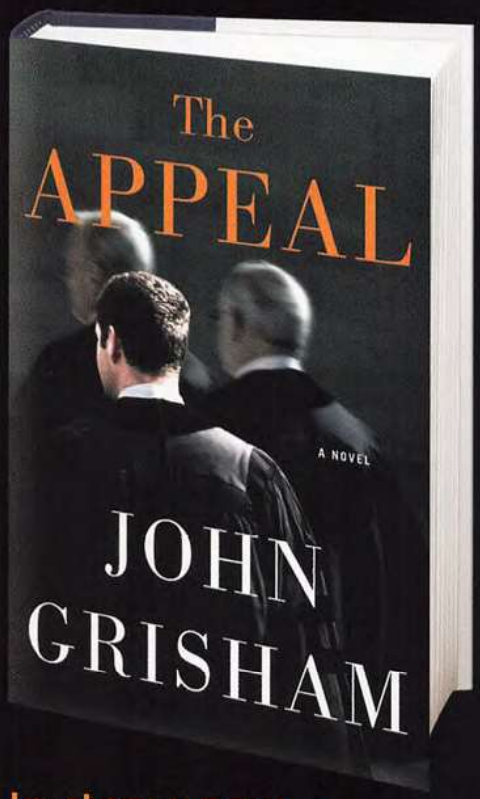

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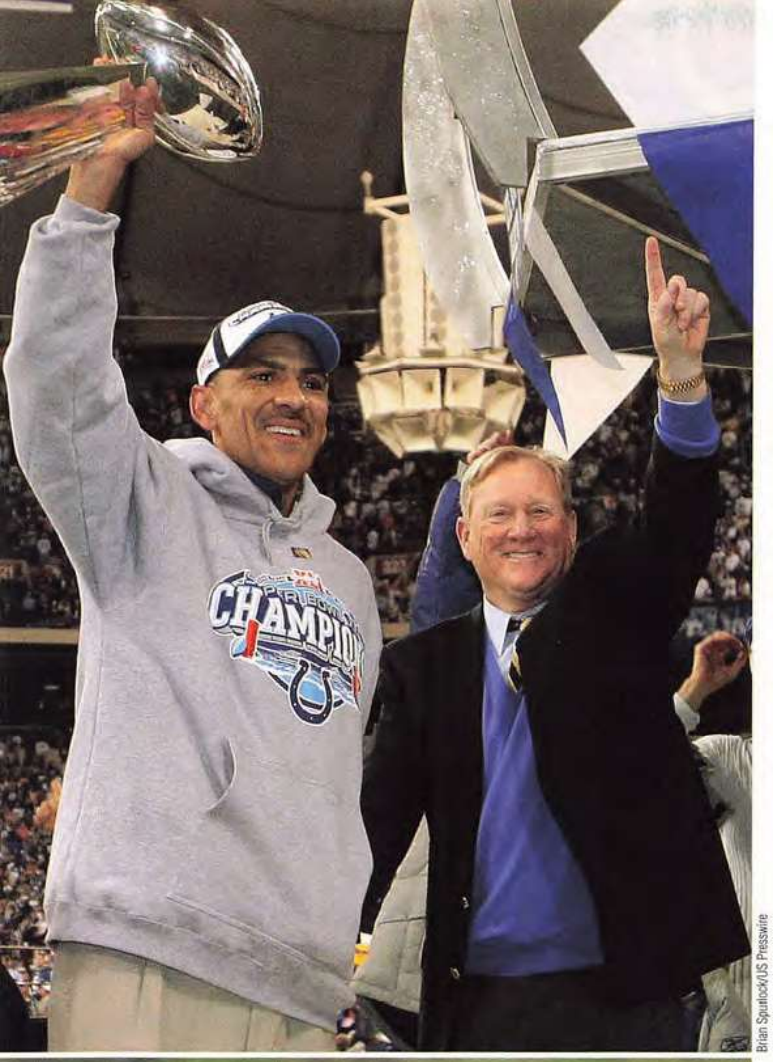

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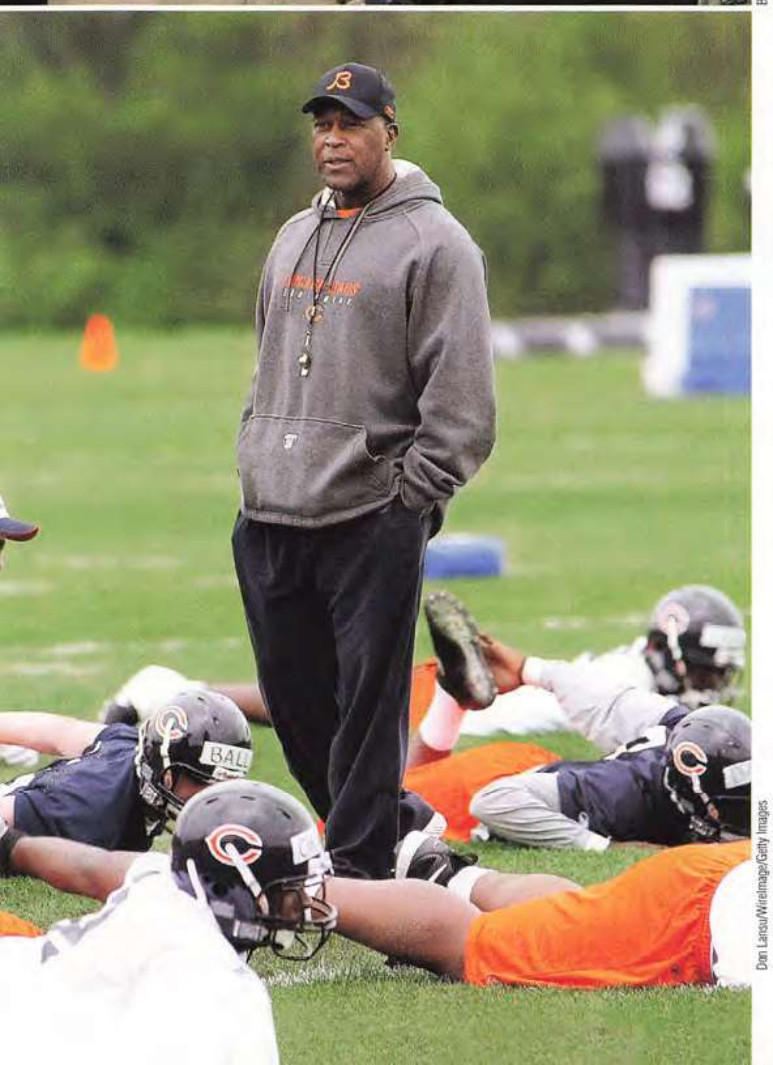


Don Lansu/Wirelmage/Getty Images

AFTER THE SUPER BOWL IS OVER AND FANS HAVE HEADED HOME, YOU'D BE MISTAKEN IF YOU THOUGHT NFL TEAMS TOOK A BREAK. NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS, BECAUSE...

next season STARTS TOMORROW!

by Adam Schefter

Take away his Super Bowl ring and his title as president of the Indianapolis Colts, and Bill Polian is not much different from anyone in the football world. He faces the same question, especially this time of year, that anyone involved with the NFL has faced.

"People who aren't familiar with my job frequently ask, 'So, what do you do in the off-season?'" Polian says.

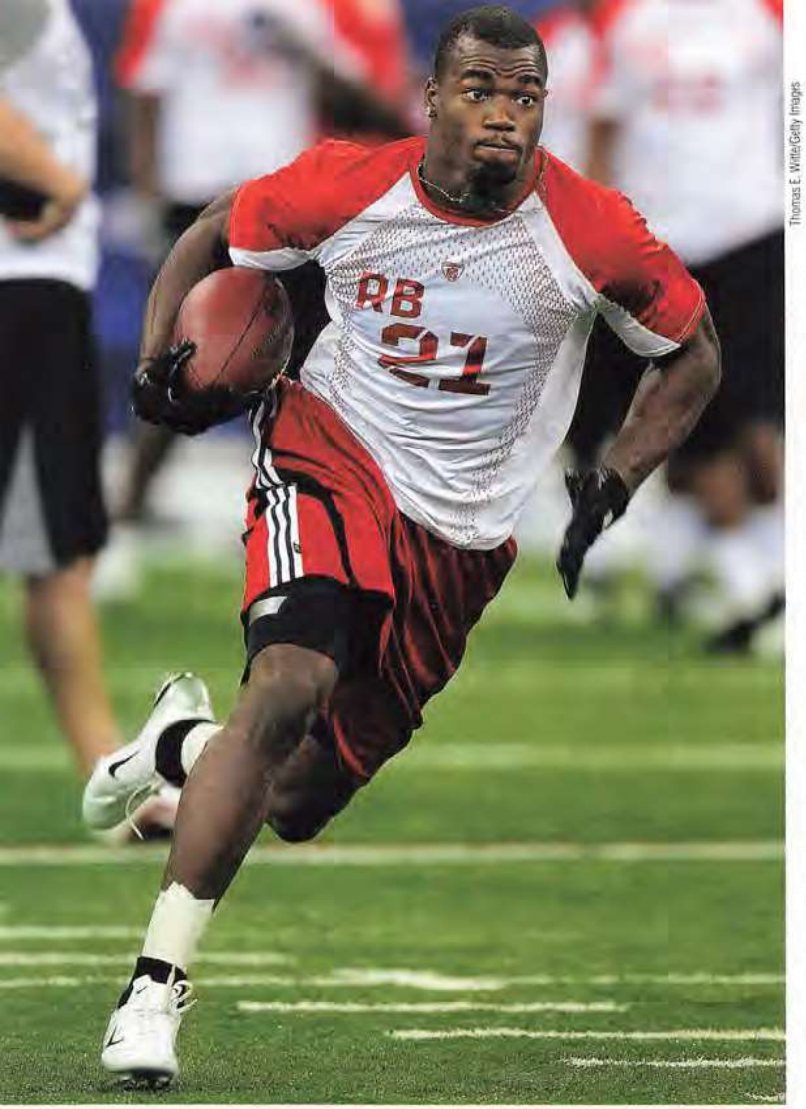
"Well," Polian answers his questioners with a sigh that reveals how much work is ahead of him, "I gotta' rebuild the team."

To the surprise of many, the off-season is football's busy season. Shortly after the cheering stops and a team plays its final game—and for all but two of the NFL's 32 clubs that happens before the Super Bowl—the work is just beginning. It starts in January with front office meetings to determine which players to re-sign and which to release. They weigh all factors: talent, potential, contract, chemistry, salary cap. Everything.

January leads to February, when franchise tags are slapped on premium players and prospective pros go through their own reality show while working out for teams at the Scouting Combine in Indianapolis.

February becomes March, when teams spend the entire month—

(Above) **Head coach Tony Dungy and team president Bill Polian celebrate the Colts' Super Bowl XLI triumph during a huge rally at the RCA Dome.** (Left) **Bears head coach Lovie Smith surveys the team's rookie minicamp that took place in May.**



Thomas E. Witte/Getty Images

Running back Adrian Peterson, who would become the Vikings' first-round pick, works out during drills at last February's NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis.

and nearly their entire budget—addressing their needs and bolstering their rosters by signing the best free agents available.

March takes us to April, when the NFL stages its annual draft, an increasingly popular event that infuses each team with hope and an entire month with excitement.

April prepares us for May, when draft picks report to mini-camps that are run in conjunction with throwing camps and almost daily "Organized Team Activities."

May turns into June, when players continue their workouts and teams finalize their rosters, and long-term contracts are signed so they don't have to be negotiated during training camp.

Finally, June gives way to July, when the Fourth marks the unofficial end of any football independence. It's time for training camp and all the practices and games that lead up to the first Sunday in February—for those looking into the immediate future that means Super Bowl XLIII in Tampa Bay—when the whole cycle begins anew.

"It just seems like football goes on...and on...and on," says Hall of Fame quarterback and current FOX analyst Troy Aikman.

If it seems that way, it's because it's true. The term "off-season" is as outdated as the rotary telephone. Like summer, fall, winter, and spring, football has developed its own four seasons: preseason, regular season, postseason, and the busy season.

For if the Super Bowl is today, then next season starts tomorrow.

Just because the NFL's other 30 teams have been busy since their seasons ended doesn't mean those playing in this year's Super Bowl have fallen behind in the race to get ready for 2008. They've been forced to keep up, similar to what the Colts and Bears faced last year.

As crazy as it may sound, the Colts were actually preparing for the 2007 season when they entered training camp in 2006, months before hoisting the Vince Lombardi Trophy in South Florida. They thought they had no choice. That's because in six of the previous seven years, Indianapolis reached the playoffs, making long seasons that much longer. With that in mind, Polian and head coach Tony Dungy sought an approach that would get their veterans the rest they were lacking.

"We ended up deciding to treat the squad two ways," says Polian. "Guys who had done the bulk of the playing were going to have a limited off-season, while those who didn't play as much would have a more traditional one with a heavy emphasis on individual technique work."

Which is exactly how it unfolded. Veterans Peyton Manning, Marvin Harrison, and Jeff Saturday were exempt from the rigorous training. They did only what they felt was needed for their bodies to recover and prepare for the coming year. Younger, more inexperienced members of the team—guard Dylan Gandy and offensive tackle Charles Johnson among them—compensated for their lack of playing time by working overtime.

The Bears used a similar approach, one they had implemented and succeeded with in previous years. Head coach Lovie Smith has never believed in taking the chance of wearing down his players. Whereas many teams install a 14-week off-season program, Smith reduced the Bears' load to 10 weeks—10 intense weeks—to better keep them fresh. And whereas other teams planned multiple two-a-day practices during training camp, Chicago vowed not to have more than a few.

"I think you can get as much done with walk-through practices and meetings," explains Smith. "When you go to the Super Bowl, you're not away from the game as long as other teams, but you still need to stay on the same schedule [as them]."

How the off-season evolved into the busy season is a story unto itself. Call it a perfect storm of groundbreaking contracts, mass marketing, media mushrooming, extra training, and clever scheduling. All together, they have produced a 365-day-a-year, 24/7 machine that takes neither nights nor holidays off.

In the early 1990s, the shift—a seismic one—occurred. As the NFL negotiated terms of a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA), then-New York Giants general manager George Young noted that the advent of free agency would bite into the downtime of everyone involved in the league. He figured that, under the terms of the new CBA, the league would be shifting to an 11-month schedule.

Young knew of what he spoke. Prior to the new CBA, teams took months off because they could. Off-season player movement came in what was known as "Plan B" free agency. It was called "Plan B" for a reason. "Plan A" players were off-limits, bound to their contracts and their teams. "Plan B" deals were essentially minor-league transactions.

But the free agency that began in 1993 was not like shopping at a local flea market anymore. It became a stroll along Fifth Avenue, a walk down Michigan Avenue, a trip to Rodeo Drive. Teams were able to bid for the services of the most attractive players they could afford.

Suddenly there was a reason for management, players, fans, and the media to pay attention. Rosters, and a team's hopes, could be remade

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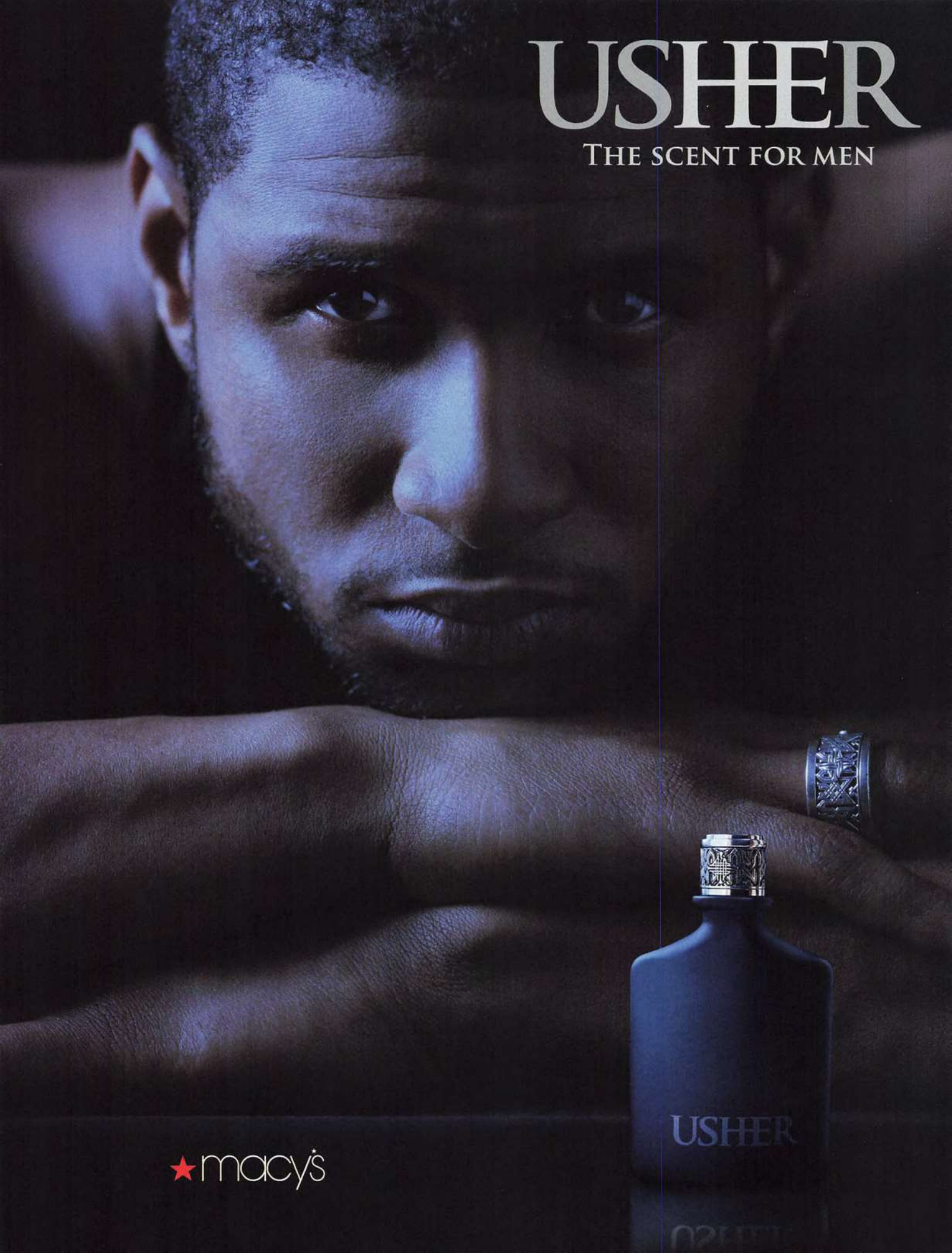
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over the course of a single winter. Baseball had its hot-stove league, but football brewed up something even better.

Denver—the first to rebuild and win through the new system—inked wide receiver Ed McCaffrey, guard Mark Schlereth, fullback Howard Griffith, defensive end Neil Smith, and cornerback Darrien Gordon, who all helped the Broncos capture back-to-back Super Bowl championships in the late '90s. Quarterback John Elway and running back Terrell Davis deservedly received much of the credit, but shrewd free agent signings undoubtedly contributed to those titles.

Around the same time, then-commissioner Paul Tagliabue began floating the idea of pushing back the start of the regular season until after the ratings-poor Labor Day weekend and shifting the Super Bowl into February, when television sweeps were underway and ratings meant more than ever. Tagliabue's thinking was as clear as high-definition TV: If ratings rose, so would the value of the NFL's television contracts.

The idea soon became reality. By 2004, the Super Bowl was slotted into February the same way Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day are.

Front offices aren't the only ones who have been asked to work longer and harder. The same is true for players. There was a time when they spent the off-season holding side jobs. Hall of Famer Chuck Bednarik was known as "Concrete Charlie" because of his gig with a concrete company. Alex Karras made more money as a pro wrestler than he did from his NFL contract. To survive, any player—even the best ones—had to work outside football.

But with money from record-breaking television contracts infusing the sport, players earned enough to make football their year-round job. They began participating in conditioning drills, then mini-camps and throwing camps, which have led to the creation of something known as Organized Team Activities—a.k.a. Training Camp Lite.

"The off-season programs are called voluntary, but in many ways they are mandatory or necessary," says former 49ers and Lions head coach Steve Mariucci, now an analyst on NFL Network. "Personally, I'd like to see the players' time lessened because it's such a [physical] sport. They're already playing 20 games a season—even more if they're a playoff team—and the body can only withstand so much."

Fans, meanwhile, can't seem to get enough. With the Scouting Combine, free agency, the draft, and constant off-season drills all extending the calendar, coverage has similarly expanded. Each team has its own local website and sometimes its own TV station. Each city has numerous sports cable and radio outlets, and there are more websites than ever devoted to football. The league has its own 24-hour network. Anyone can watch or read about the NFL at any time.

Lovie Smith could sense the difference last year. When he arrived at Super Bowl XXXIV in January 2000 as the Rams' defensive coordinator, he spotted an army of reporters. But by Super Bowl XLI, their ranks had swelled to a multi-national force. True, Smith had a different job that demanded more attention and the game was a landmark event for many reasons, but the Super Bowl now represents to sports reporters what the Democratic and Republican National Conventions are to the political media. Everyone who is anyone has to be there.

"With the coverage now, there's just so much of everything," Smith says. "There's so much information out there, and fans are looking for it more, and they're getting it. Five minutes after something happens, it's all over NFL Network."

James V. Biever/Winnimage/Getty Images

David J. Phillip/AP WWP

(Top) **Packers college scouting director John Dorsey, head coach Mike McCarthy, and general manager Ted Thompson strategize during the 2007 draft.** (Above) **The Texans' Mike Flanagan (No. 58) battles Mike Brisiel during training camp.**

No one can say whether this year-round NFL was planned or took place by accident, but this much is undeniable: It has happened. Polian's summer of 2007 says it all. Not long after winning his first Super Bowl, he headed to his regular summer vacation spot in Falmouth, Mass., for a month of rest and relaxation before the season got underway.

It didn't quite happen as planned. First, he spent five full days negotiating Dwight Freeney's record-breaking six-year, $72 million deal, keeping the Pro Bowl defensive end in Indianapolis.

Then he received a call from Tarik Glenn, the talented 31-year-old offensive tackle entrusted with protecting Manning's blind side. The three-time Pro Bowler had unexpectedly decided to retire and felt obliged to call and inform the team president. So, instead of watching sunsets, Polian was confronted with the sun setting on one of his key player's careers. Yet he remained unflappable.

"Every year is now a new team. You don't think of continuity anymore," Polian says. "You think of building a new 53-man team every year. We strive never to be shocked by anything and to lay the groundwork 12 months a year so we're ready for all the things that happen at all times."

Still, there are occasions when these bolts come out of nowhere. They find NFL presidents and coaches at any time and at any place, even during their summer hideaways.

It signifies a new NFL axiom that goes along with another long-standing one: There are no "I's" in team.

And now, there are no "Z's" in vacation.

Adam Schefter is the author of three football-related books and has worked as a news reporter for NFL Network since 2004.

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WHO WANTS IT MOST?

{ WEEK 1 } CHAMPS KICK OFF THE SEASON IN STYLE

Thursday, Sept. 6
@ Indianapolis 41.....New Orleans 10

Sunday, Sept. 9
Denver 15.....@ Buffalo 14
Pittsburgh 34.....@ Cleveland 7
@ Green Bay 16.....Philadelphia 13
@ Houston 20.....Kansas City 3
Tennessee 13.....@ Jacksonville 10
@ Minnesota 24.....Atlanta 3
New England 38.....@ N.Y. Jets 14
Carolina 27.....@ St. Louis 13
@ Washington 16.....Miami 13 (OT)
Detroit 36.....@ Oakland 21
@ San Diego 14.....Chicago 3
@ Seattle 20.....Tampa Bay 6
@ Dallas 45.....N.Y. Giants 35

Monday, Sept. 10
@ Cincinnati 27.....Baltimore 20
@ San Francisco 20.....Arizona 17

AFTER A STAR-STUDDED CAST OF ENTERTAINERS WARMED UP THE CROWD, THE DEFENDING SUPER BOWL CHAMPION COLTS STOLE THE SHOW AS THE NFL'S 88TH SEASON TOOK FLIGHT WITH "NFL OPENING KICKOFF 2007" IN INDIANAPOLIS.

Peyton Manning and an inspired defense shared top billing and sparked a second-half eruption that resulted in a 41-10 triumph over the Saints at the RCA Dome. Manning threw three touchdown passes—two to Reggie Wayne and one to Marvin Harrison—as part of his 288-yard night, while Indy's defense forced three turnovers and didn't allow the visitors into the end zone. Joseph Addai added 118 rushing yards in the victory.

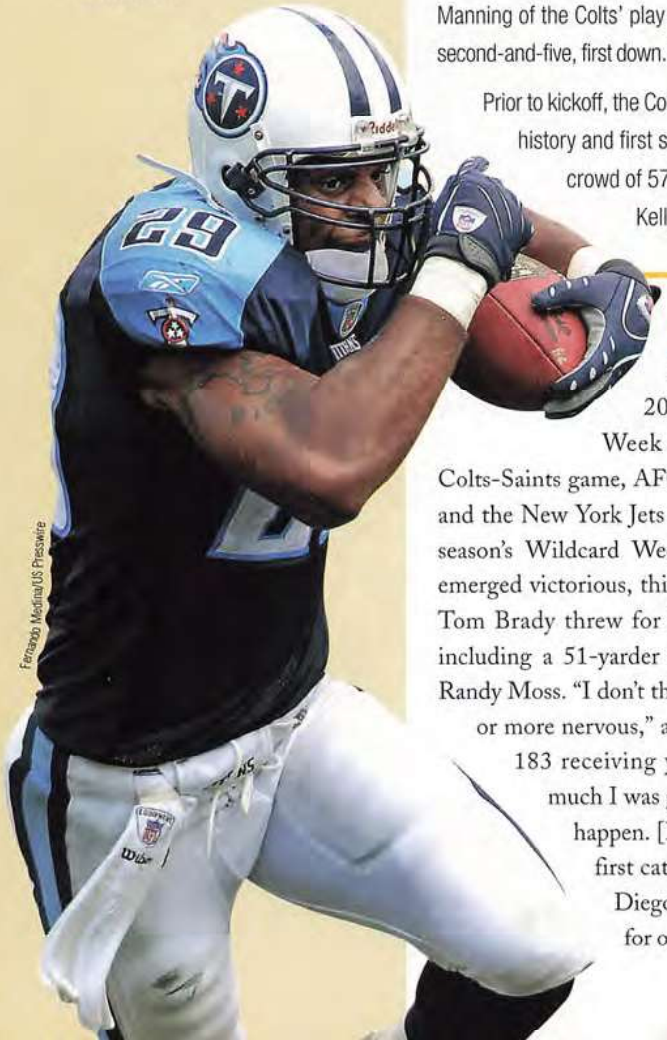
New Orleans, which reached the NFC title game a year ago, staked a 10-7 lead on Jason David's 55-yard fumble return for a score and Olindo Mare's 34-yard field goal. But Adam Vinatieri countered with a 33-yard field goal to knot the game at halftime and Manning directed a pair of third-quarter TD drives, the latter capped by a 28-yard strike to Wayne.

"We kind of stayed in what we call 'in phase,'" said Manning of the Colts' play after intermission. "First down, second-and-five, first down. Maybe a third-and-five. The execution was better. We never really got in a rhythm [in the first half]."

Prior to kickoff, the Colts unfurled their Super Bowl XLI championship banner—the second Super Bowl title in franchise history and first since moving to Indianapolis—while Hoosier-state native John Mellencamp rocked a sold-out crowd of 57,361. At nearby Monument Circle, thousands of fans attended a free concert from Faith Hill, Kelly Clarkson, and Hinder that was televised nationally on NBC.

Michael Hickey/Getty Images

▲ **KEEPING THE FAITH. Country pop star Faith Hill performs as part of the NFL's Kickoff 2007 event in Indianapolis.**



Fernando Medina/US Presswire

▼ **TITANIC EFFORT. Chris Brown steered a powerful ground attack that carried Tennessee to an AFC South victory over Jacksonville.**

BEST BATTLES

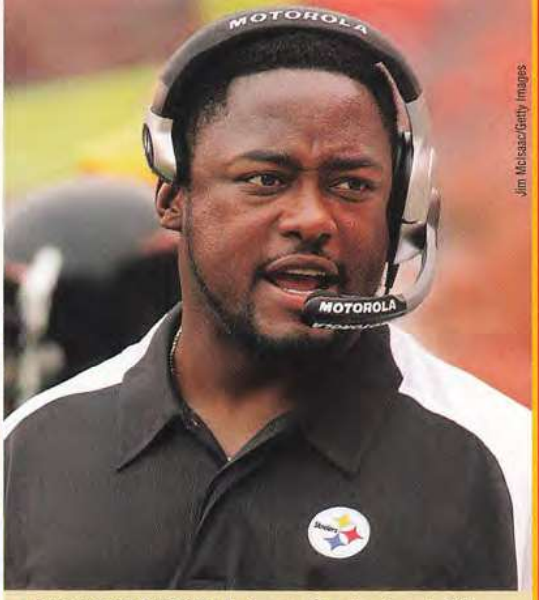
Eight playoff teams from 2006 went head-to-head in Week One. In addition to the Colts-Saints game, AFC East rivals New England and the New York Jets met in a rematch from last season's Wildcard Weekend. The Patriots again emerged victorious, this time by a 38-14 count, as Tom Brady threw for 297 yards and three TDs, including a 51-yarder to newly acquired receiver Randy Moss. "I don't think I ever was more anxious or more nervous," admitted Moss, who totaled 183 receiving yards. "I didn't know how much I was going to play or what might happen. [But] I settled down after the first catch and the first hit." In San Diego, LaDainian Tomlinson ran for one touchdown and threw for another to pace the Chargers' 14-3 victory over the defending NFC champion Bears. Meanwhile, the Cowboys outpointed the New York Giants, 45-35, in the highest-scoring game in series history. Tony Romo hooked up with Terrell Owens on a pair of TD passes and clinched the game with his 51-yard scoring strike to Sam Hurd with 3:03 remaining.

ENTER THE COACH

Seven teams had new head coaches patrolling the sidelines, with three of those coming away victorious. In addition to San Diego's Norv Turner and Dallas' Wade Phillips, Mike Tomlin made his Pittsburgh debut a memorable one. Taking over for Bill Cowher, who coached the Steelers for the previous 15 years, Tomlin's squad rolled past Cleveland, 34-7. Ben Roethlisberger fired four TD passes, Willie Parker rushed for 109 yards, and Pittsburgh's defense caused

Bill Baptist/Getty Images

▲ MARIO'S WORLD. Defensive end Mario Williams collects one of his two sacks during Houston's victory over Kansas City.

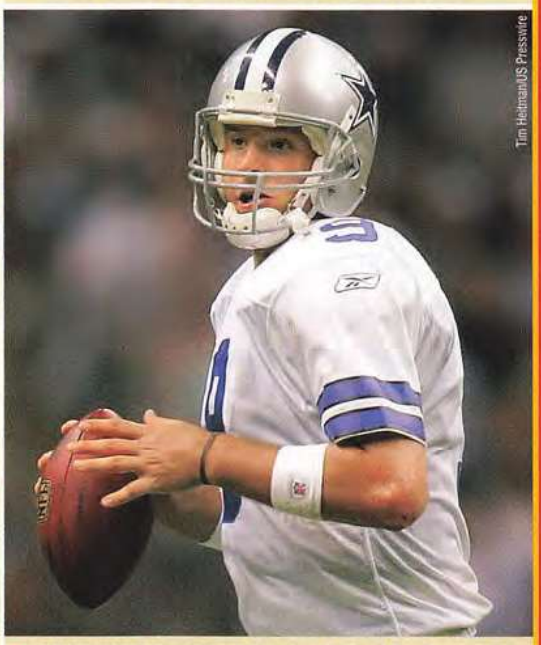


Jim Mcisaac/Getty Images

▲ RAISING THE CURTAIN. A win over Cleveland made Mike Tomlin's debut as the Steelers' head coach a success.

Dick Druckman/AP Wide World

▲ WING MAN. The Patriots' Willie Andrews (left) shields Ellis Hobbs during the latter's record 108-yard kickoff return.



Tim Heitman/US Presswire

▲ STAR POWER. Tony Romo's big night helped the Cowboys to their highest point total in a season opener since 1971.

five turnovers. Even after the team presented Tomlin with the game ball, the 35-year-old coach insisted, "This win is not about me. This is the story of the 2007 Steelers." Cowher's departure made the Titans' Jeff Fisher and the Broncos' Mike Shanahan the coaches with the most consecutive years of service with their teams, both entering their 13th full season. Fisher worked as Tennessee's head coach/defensive coordinator for the final six games of 1994 before officially being named head coach at the end of that year. Shanahan took over at Denver in 1995.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

The season's first overtime game went the way of Washington. Clinton Portis scored on a 19-yard run and Shaun Suisham kicked three field goals, the final one a 39-yarder early in the extra session that lifted the Redskins over Miami, 16-13…Denver pulled out a victory on the final play of regulation when Jason Elam—who had earlier missed two kicks—made good on a 42-yard FG to tip the Bills, 15-14. Broncos QB Jay Cutler threw for 304 yards in the victory…Green Bay's Jarrett Bush recovered a muffed punt at the Eagles 31-yard line, setting up Mason Crosby's 42-yard field goal with two seconds to play as the Packers squeaked out a 16-13 win…Arnaz Battle's 1-yard TD run with 22 seconds remaining pushed the 49ers past Arizona, 20-17, in the second half of a Monday night doubleheader. In the first game, Michael Myers intercepted a pass in the end zone with 1:13 remaining to preserve the Bengals' 27-20 win over Baltimore…Minnesota returned two interceptions for touchdowns—Kevin Williams' 54-yarder in the opening quarter and Antoine Winfield's 14-yarder in the game's final minutes—as part of a 24-3 triumph over Atlanta.

WEEK 1
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Chris Brown (RB, Titans)
Rushed for a career-high 175 yards, part of his team's 282 yards on the ground, in victory at Jacksonville.

DEFENSE
Mario Williams (DE, Texans)
Scored first career touchdown on a 38-yard fumble return, and added two sacks, five tackles, and three QB hurries in win over Chiefs.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Ellis Hobbs (KR-CB, Patriots)
108-yard kickoff return to open the second half of win over Jets was longest in NFL history and equaled league's longest scoring play ever.

OFFENSE
Tony Romo (QB, Cowboys)
Threw for 345 yards and four TDs—posting a 128.5 passer rating—and also added a rushing touchdown in triumph over Giants.

DEFENSE
Dewayne White (DE, Lions)
Seven tackles, one sack, two forced fumbles, and a key fourth-quarter interception as Lions rallied to win at Oakland for first time in history.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Mason Crosby (K, Packers)
In NFL debut, kicked field goals from 53, 37, and 42 yards, the last with two seconds to play, to help upend visiting Philadelphia.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Patrick Willis (LB, 49ers)
Made a team-leading 11 tackles—including nine solo stops—and forced a fumble in win over Cardinals.

"When I got this job, he said to me, 'You know, I throw the ball.'"

~New Chargers coach Norv Turner, speaking about running back LaDainian Tomlinson, who had a TD pass in San Diego's win over Chicago.

{ WEEK 2 } FAVRE FABULOUS IN MILESTONE WIN

Sunday, Sept. 16
Houston 34 .....@ Carolina 21
@ Cleveland 51 .....Cincinnati 45
Indianapolis 22.....@ Tennessee 20
@ Tampa Bay 31 .....New Orleans 14
San Francisco 17.....@ St. Louis 16
@ Pittsburgh 26.....Buffalo 3
Green Bay 35 .....@ N.Y. Giants 13
@ Jacksonville 13.....Atlanta 7
@ Arizona 23 .....Seattle 20
Dallas 37 .....@ Miami 20
@ Detroit 20 .....Minnesota 17 (OT)
@ Denver 23 .....Oakland 20 (OT)
@ Chicago 20 .....Kansas City 10
@ Baltimore 20 .....N.Y. Jets 13
@ New England 38.....San Diego 14

Monday, Sept. 17
Washington 20.....@ Philadelphia 12

IT WAS BRETT FAVRE AT HIS FINEST. THE VETERAN QB TURNED IN A MASTERFUL SECOND-HALF PERFORMANCE TO LIFT THE PACKERS TO A 35-13 DECISION OVER THE NEW YORK GIANTS AND EARN HIS NFL-RECORD 149TH CAREER VICTORY.

The win was Green Bay's second straight over a 2006 playoff participant as the team improved to 2-0 for the first time in six seasons. Favre was at his best after the break, completing 18 of 21 passes with three touchdowns. His short scoring toss to Bubba Franks erased a 10-7 halftime deficit, and on the Packers' next drive he completed nine straight passes, the final one a 3-yard TD to Donald Lee. He later hooked up with Donald Driver for a 10-yard touchdown that extended Green Bay's lead to 28-13.

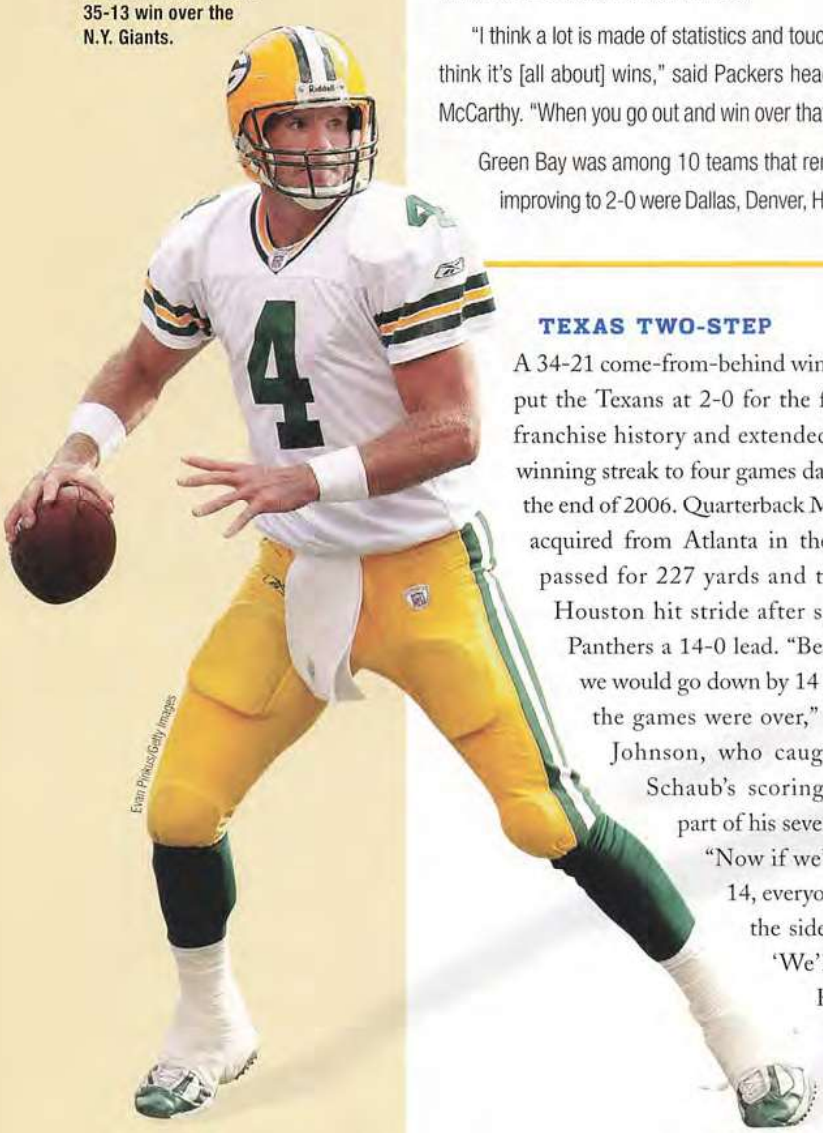
With the triumph, Favre eclipsed John Elway for most wins by an NFL starting quarterback. He also moved closer to Dan Marino's record for career touchdown passes, pulling within three of Marino's mark of 420.

"I think a lot is made of statistics and touchdowns, but I think it's [all about] wins," said Packers head coach Mike McCarthy. "When you go out and win over that period of time, that's the ultimate compliment a quarterback can have."

Green Bay was among 10 teams that remained unbeaten, a list that included fellow NFC North member Detroit. Also improving to 2-0 were Dallas, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, New England, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Washington.

Mark Duncan/AP WWP

▲ **POINTS AND COUNTERPOINTS. Jamal Lewis breaks free for a 66-yard touchdown run during the Browns' wild win.**


Evan Pinkus/Getty Images

▼ **GREEN DAY. Brett Favre was on the money with three second-half touchdown passes in the Packers' 35-13 win over the N.Y. Giants.**

TEXAS TWO-STEP

A 34-21 come-from-behind win at Carolina put the Texans at 2-0 for the first time in franchise history and extended the team's winning streak to four games dating back to the end of 2006. Quarterback Matt Schaub, acquired from Atlanta in the offseason, passed for 227 yards and two TDs as Houston hit stride after spotting the Panthers a 14-0 lead. "Before [when] we would go down by 14 points early, the games were over," said Andre Johnson, who caught both of Schaub's scoring throws as part of his seven-catch day. "Now if we're down by 14, everyone comes to the sideline saying, 'We'll be fine.'" Kris Brown's 25-yard field goal put Houston in front before halftime and the Texans would add touchdowns on Ahman Green's 13-yard run and Kevin Walter's fumble recovery in the end zone, one of three turnovers forced by the team's defense. "We're doing some things better, and we're still doing a lot of things that we've got to improve on to be a good football team," insisted second-year head coach Gary Kubiak. "It's just one of 16, and I'm proud of our football team to come here on the road and win."

TWICE THE "O" IN OHIO

AFC North foes—and Buckeye State brethren—Cleveland and Cincinnati combined for more than 1,000 yards of offense and put nearly 100 points on the scoreboard in a wild 51-45 Browns victory. Cleveland QB Derek Anderson, making just his fourth career start, fired five touchdown passes—two each to Joe Jurevicius and Braylon Edwards and another to Kellen Winslow—as part of a 328-yard passing day and received ground support from Jamal

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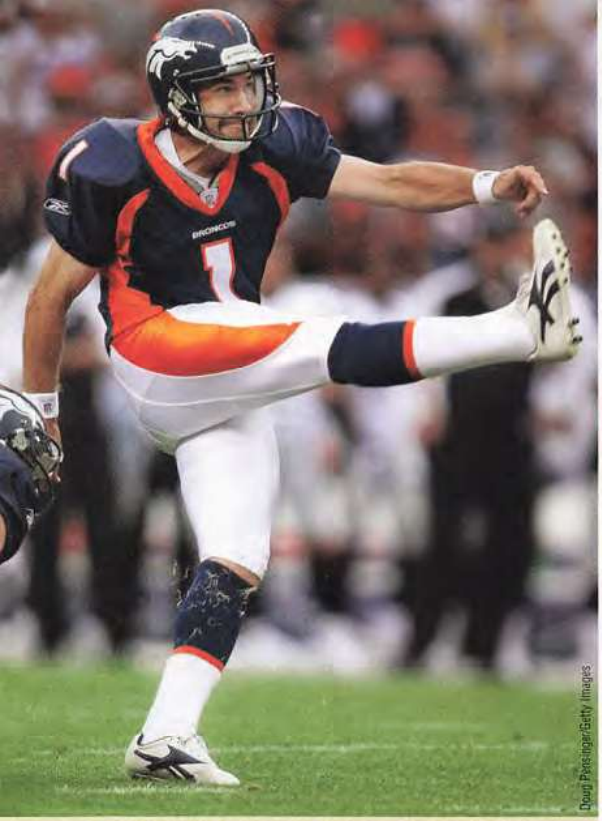


Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

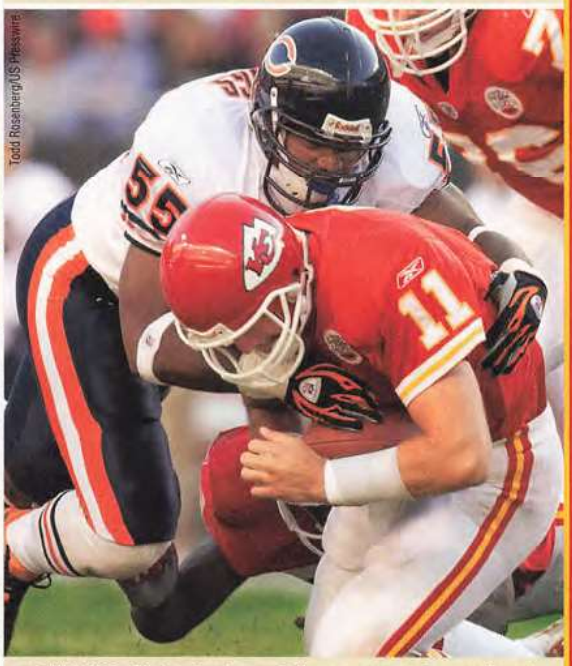
▲ ELAM'S EXTRA EFFORT. For the second straight week, a Jason Elam field goal put Denver in the win column.

Matt York/AP WWP

▲ GETTING THE EDGE. Edgerrin James rushed for 128 yards and one touchdown as Arizona slipped past Seattle.

Bill Boyce/AP WWP

▲ ORCHESTRATING A WIN. Head coach Mike Nolan directed the 49ers to a 2-0 start with a 17-16 decision over the Rams.



Todd Rosenberg/US Presswire

▲ BEAR HUG. Linebacker Lance Briggs wraps up Damon Huard for one of his two sacks in Chicago's win over Kansas City.

Lewis' 215 rushing yards. "I'm excited about this win," said Edwards, who had eight catches for 146 yards. "For the first time in a long time, I'm excited to go home and watch our highlights." Bengals signal-caller Carson Palmer threw a career-best six touchdowns but was intercepted in the final seconds by Leigh Bodden, allowing the Browns to hold on. The game was just the third in NFL history to have opposing QBs each throw five TDs. The last time was 1969 when New Orleans' Billy Kilmer and the St. Louis Cardinals' Charley Johnson did it.

DOUBLE TAKES

By beating Buffalo, 26-3, the Steelers became the first AFC team to reach 500 wins. Willie Parker rushed for 126 yards in the victory, and Pittsburgh's defense allowed just 10 first downs and 223 total yards …Detroit's 20-17 triumph over the Vikings snapped Minnesota's 10-game series win streak. The Lions intercepted four passes and Shaun Rogers recovered a fumble in overtime to set up Jason Hanson's game-winning 37-yard field goal…Two other divisional contests were decided by field goals: Jason Elam hit a 23-yarder that lifted the Broncos to a 23-20 overtime victory against the Raiders, while Arizona's Neil Rackers made a 42-yarder with one second left in regulation for a 23-20 win over the Seahawks…New England jumped out to a 24-0 halftime lead and coasted to a 38-14 decision over San Diego in a rematch from the 2006 AFC playoffs. Tom Brady completed 25 of 31 passes for 279 yards and three TDs…Ray Lewis' end-zone interception with 1:04 to play preserved the Ravens' 20-13 triumph over the Jets…Joey Galloway caught TD passes of 69 and 24 yards in Tampa Bay's 31-14 win over New Orleans.

WEEK 2
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Derek Anderson (QB, Browns)
Completed 20 of 33 passes with five touchdowns, while posting a 121.0 passer rating, in 51-45 win over Cincinnati, the eighth-highest scoring game in NFL history.

DEFENSE
Bob Sanders (S, Colts)
Contributed 11 tackles and had two sacks to halt a last-minute Tennessee drive that preserved a narrow victory.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Jason Elam (K, Broncos)
Tied game with 20-yard FG with 2:18 to go and then kicked game-winning 23-yarder in overtime to beat Oakland.

OFFENSE
Brett Favre (QB, Packers)
Completed 29 of 38 passes (76.3 percent) for 286 yards and three touchdowns–his 59th game with at least three TDs–in win over Giants.

DEFENSE
Barrett Ruud (LB, Buccaneers)
Recorded 16 tackles, forced two fumbles, and had a fumble recovery that set up team's first touchdown in triumph over New Orleans.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester (PR-KR, Bears)
Averaged 28.6 yards on five punt returns and scored seventh career return TD by bringing back a punt 73 yards during win over Chiefs.

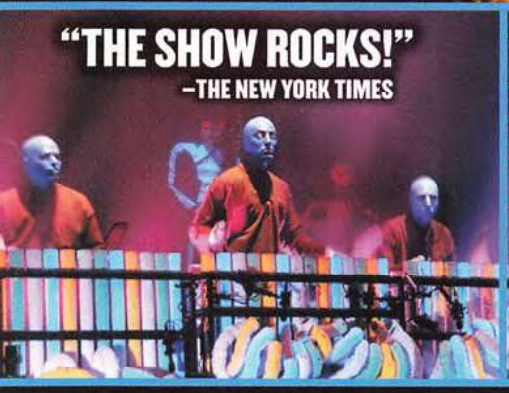
DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Patrick Willis (LB, 49ers)
Made a game-high eight tackles (five solo, three assists) and helped limit running back Steven Jackson to 60 yards on 21 carries in win over Rams.

"I feel every time I get my hands on the ball it's a touchdown."
~Devin Hester, after bringing back a punt 73 yards for a score in Chicago's win over Kansas City, his seventh career return for a touchdown.

BLUE MAN GROUP

PHOTO BY JAMES PORTO

TRIPLE COVERAGE.



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{ WEEK 3 } FAMILIAR FACES STEP TO THE FOREFRONT

Sunday, Sept. 23
@ Baltimore 26 .....Arizona 23
@ Green Bay 31 .....San Diego 24
Indianapolis 30.....@ Houston 24
@ Kansas City 13.....Minnesota 10
@ New England 38.....Buffalo 7
@ N.Y. Jets 31.....Miami 28
@ Philadelphia 56 .....Detroit 21
@ Pittsburgh 37 .....San Francisco 16
@ Tampa Bay 24 .....St. Louis 3
Jacksonville 23.....@ Denver 14
@ Oakland 26.....Cleveland 24
@ Seattle 24 .....Cincinnati 21
Carolina 27.....@ Atlanta 20
N.Y. Giants 24 .....@ Washington 17
Dallas 34 .....@ Chicago 10

Monday, Sept. 24
Tennessee 31 .....@ New Orleans 14

THE COLTS, STEELERS, AND PATRIOTS—THE LAST THREE TEAMS TO WIN SUPER BOWL TITLES—LED THE NFL'S PARADE OF UNBEATENS, WHILE DALLAS AND GREEN BAY ROUNDED OUT THE NARROWING LIST OF THOSE YET TO LOSE IN 2007.

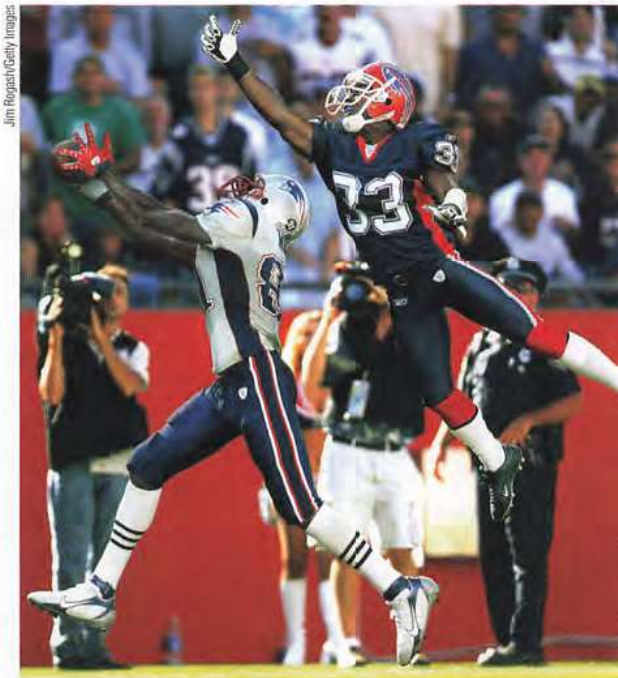
New England's start rated as the most impressive of the bunch. For the third straight game, the Patriots lit up the scoreboard for 38 points, this time while manhandling the Buffalo Bills at Gillette Stadium.

Tom Brady's 8-yard touchdown to Benjamin Watson put the Patriots ahead for good midway through the second quarter, and he later hit Jabar Gaffney with a scoring strike and twice connected with Randy Moss for TDs. Moss became the first receiver in NFL history to amass 100 yards receiving in each of his first three games with a new team.

"I just try to throw it up as high as I can and put it out there where only [Randy] can get it," said Brady, who completed 23 of 29 passes for 311 yards. "With his length, even when the defensive back is on his hip, he can extend and make the play. My job is easy."

Brett Favre made it look easy, too, with three TD passes in the Packers' 31-24 win over San Diego, giving him 420 for his career to tie Dan Marino's NFL record. His final one, a 57-yarder to Greg Jennings, put Green Bay ahead to stay.

Jim Rogash/Getty Images



▲ ALL IN STRIDE. Randy Moss outstretches the Bills' Jabari Greer for a touchdown during the Patriots' 38-7 victory.

▼ AN EFFORT FOR THE AGES. Perhaps inspired by their throwback uniforms, QB Donovan McNabb and the Eagles responded with their highest point total in 54 years.

Rusty Kennedy/AP Wide World

THE SIZZLING SOUTH

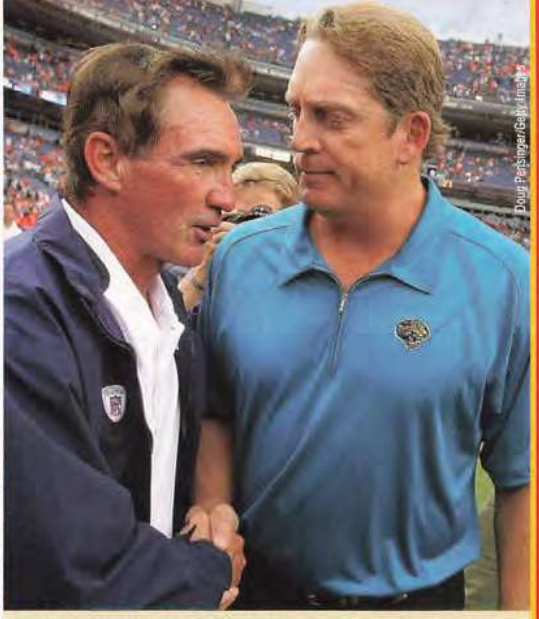
All four teams in the AFC South possessed winning records through three weeks, with their only losses coming within the division. The Colts moved into sole possession of the top spot by tripping up the previously undefeated Texans, 30-24, behind a pair of Joseph Addai TD runs and three Adam Vinatieri field goals. Jacksonville took its road show to Denver and shut down the Broncos, 23-14, to improve to 2-1. The Jaguars controlled the ball for nearly 39 minutes, a figure helped by an 18-play, first-quarter scoring drive that sapped 11:44 off the clock and was capped by David Garrard's 3-yard pass to Reggie Williams. "That was a big statement," said head coach Jack Del Rio, "and set the tone of the day for us." The Titans closed out Week Three by beating the Saints, 31-14, to raise their record to 2-1. LenDale White's 1-yard run moved Tennessee in front midway through the third quarter and Vincent Fuller iced the game with his 61-yard interception return for a touchdown. The victory was the Titans' 10th in 14 games since starting last season with an 0-5 mark.

HOW 'BOUT THEM COWBOYS

Dallas improved to 3-0 for the first time since 1999, pulling away in the second half for a 34-10 road win over the defending NFC champion Bears. Tony Romo completed 22 of 35 passes for 329 yards, a performance highlighted by third-quarter TD throws to Jason Witten and Marion Barber. Barber, whose catch snapped a 10-10 tie, later added a 1-yard scoring run and finished the game with 102 yards rushing. "I think we're a very explosive offense," said Romo of an attack averaging a league-leading 38.7 ppg.

Greg Nelson/Sports Images

▲ RAIDER REJECTION. Tommy Kelly (No. 93) reaches in to block Phil Dawson's FG attempt in Oakland's 26-24 win.

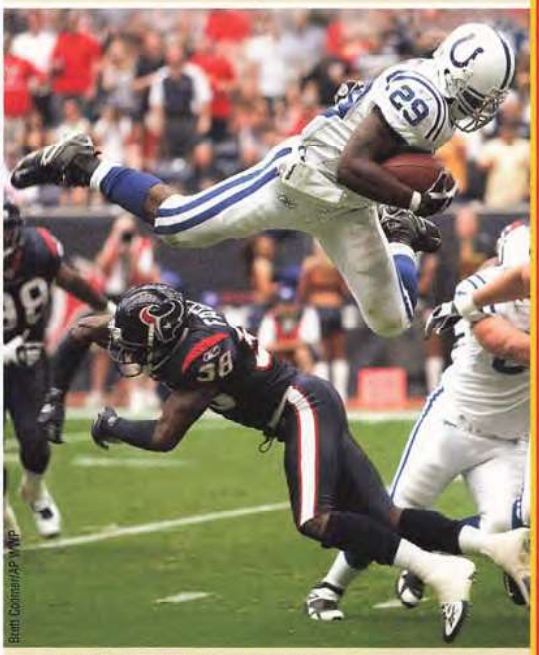


Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

▲ GOOD WORK, COACH. Mike Shanahan congratulates Jack Del Rio after the Jaguars knocked off his Broncos, 23-14.

John Freschaug/AP WVP

▲ HAWK HOLDS ON. Seattle's Nate Burleson crosses the goal line with the game-winning TD just beyond Madieu Williams' reach.



Brett Coomer/AP WVP

▲ ADDAI GOES HIGH. Joseph Addai leaps over Houston's Demarcus Faggins for a touchdown in the Colts' victory.

"The funny thing is last year I think we were a good offense as well. But this year we're going down the field in chunks. And while you're not going to have as high a completion percentage, you're probably going to score more points with the way we're doing things." The Dallas defense kept Chicago out of the end zone for most of the night and benefited from two Anthony Henry interceptions, one he returned 28 yards for a touchdown early in the fourth quarter.

THREE'S THE CHARM

Eli Manning's 33-yard touchdown pass to Plaxico Burress broke a fourth-quarter tie as the Giants edged Washington, 24-17, for their first win of the season…Another close call saw Seattle trip up the Bengals in a back-and-forth affair that had six lead changes, the last coming on Nate Burleson's 22-yard TD catch that won it for the Seahawks, 24-21…Kansas City gave up the first 10 points, but bounced back for a 13-10 win over Minnesota, with Damon Huard tossing the go-ahead strike to Dwayne Bowe with 9:23 to play…Donovan McNabb threw for four TDs as part of his 381-yard day in the Eagles' 56-21 win over Detroit. His top target was Kevin Curtis, who had 11 catches for 221 yards and three touchdowns…Chad Pennington had a pair of scoring passes and ran for another TD to lead the Jets to a 31-28 victory over Miami…The Steelers' 37-16 win over San Francisco marked their 27th straight game without allowing a 100-yard rusher. Willie Parker paced Pittsburgh with 133 rushing yards…After watching the Cardinals rally from a late 17-point deficit, the Ravens pulled out a 26-23 victory on Matt Stover's 46-yard field goal at the final gun.

WEEK 3
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady (QB, Patriots)
Posted a career-high 150.9 passer rating and tied his career-high with four TD passes in win over Bills.

DEFENSE
Keith Bulluck (LB, Titans)
Equaled a franchise record with three interceptions, two coming in the fourth quarter, in victory over Saints.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Yamon Figurs (WR-KR, Ravens)
Scored on a 75-yard second-quarter punt return that helped beat Arizona.

OFFENSE
Brian Westbrook (RB, Eagles)
Scored three times and finished game with a career-high 221 yards from scrimmage in victory over Detroit.

DEFENSE
Anthony Henry (CB, Cowboys)
Four tackles, four passes defensed, and two interceptions in road win against Chicago.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Lance Laury (LB, Seahawks)
Forced a fumble on a kickoff return with less than a minute to play that sealed a victory over Cincinnati.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Dwayne Bowe (WR, Chiefs)
Caught five passes for 71 yards, including the go-ahead touchdown that defeated Minnesota.

"If you can't get it done on Monday night, you'll never be able to get it done. I backed it up."

~Tennessee's Keith Bulluck, who had three interceptions in the Titans' *Monday Night Football* win over the Saints.

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{ WEEK 4 } GIANTS CHASE DOWN A WIN AND A RECORD

Sunday, Sept. 30

@ Atlanta 26	Houston 16
@ Buffalo 17	N.Y. Jets 14
@ Cleveland 27	Baltimore 13
@ Dallas 35	St. Louis 7
@ Detroit 37	Chicago 27
Oakland 35	@ Miami 17
Green Bay 23	@ Minnesota 16
Tampa Bay 20	@ Carolina 7
Seattle 23	@ San Francisco 3
@ Arizona 21	Pittsburgh 14
@ Indianapolis 38	Denver 20
Kansas City 30	@ San Diego 16
@ N.Y. Giants 16	Philadelphia 3

Monday, Oct. 1

New England 34	@ Cincinnati 13

Open Dates

Jacksonville, New Orleans, Tennessee, Washington

INSPIRED BY A SWARMING DEFENSE THAT TIED THE NFL RECORD FOR SACKS IN A GAME AND DIDN'T ALLOW A TOUCHDOWN, THE GIANTS SOARED TO A 16-3 VICTORY OVER THE EAGLES IN A BATTLE BETWEEN NFC EAST RIVALS.

Defensive end Osi Umenyiora collected six of the team's 12 sacks, while Mathias Kiwanuka had three, Justin Tuck added two, and Michael Strahan made the other. The Giants became the fifth NFL team with 12 sacks in a game and the first since Dallas accomplished the feat in a 1985 contest against the Houston Oilers.

"We knew we would eventually get some sacks," said Umenyiora, whose total was one shy of the individual league mark of seven held by Derrick Thomas. "We have some of the best pass rushers in the league on this team."

The Giants defense also put points on the board with Kawika Mitchell scoring on a 17-yard fumble return late in the third quarter that made it a 16-0 game. New York's first touchdown came on Plaxico Burress' 9-yard reception, and Lawrence Tynes added a 29-yard field goal. The Eagles managed a 53-yard David Akers FG to avoid the shutout.

Overall, the Giants allowed just 190 total yards, though Philadelphia's defense was nearly as good, yielding 212. The win was the Giants' second in a row as they improved to 2-2 on the year.

▼ **ANOTHER SACK IN SIGHT. Giants defensive end Osi Umenyiora puts on the pressure during his team's 16-3 victory over the Eagles. New York tied an NFL record with 12 sacks.**

Rich Kane/US Presswire

Thomas E. Witte/Getty Images

▲ **SOME KICK LEFT IN HIM. Morten Andersen added to his NFL scoring record with four FGs in Atlanta's win over Houston.**

MULTIPLE DIVISION CONTESTS

More than half the games on the Week Four docket were division battles. One of the best took place at Ford Field, where Detroit rallied to beat Chicago in an NFC North showdown. Trailing 13-3, the Lions erupted for an NFL-record 34 fourth-quarter points in a 37-27 victory. Jon Kitna threw a pair of TD passes during the late uprising, Keith Smith brought back an interception 64 yards, and Casey FitzSimmons returned a failed onside kick 41 yards for the final score. "That's what happens in the NFL; things can get crazy," said Kitna, who completed 20 of 24 passes for 247 yards. "Everything gets carried by momentum and emotional swings, and you end up with 10-3 games that turn into something like this." Over in the AFC West, Kansas City battled back from a 10-point first-quarter deficit to beat the host Chargers, 30-16. Damon Huard's 51-yard touchdown throw to rookie Dwayne Bowe put the Chiefs in front for good early in the fourth quarter. "When I caught it, I saw green grass, and I just went to the races," said Bowe, who had eight receptions on the day. Defensive back Tyron Brackenridge sealed the victory by returning a fumble 50 yards for the game's final score.

LEADER OF THE PACK

Brett Favre continued his assault on the NFL record book and helped the Packers stay perfect on the year. He threw two touchdown passes, becoming the NFL's all-time leader in that category, as Green Bay improved to 4-0 with a 23-16 win at Minnesota. Favre's 16-yard first-quarter TD to Greg Jennings marked the 421st of his career, moving him past

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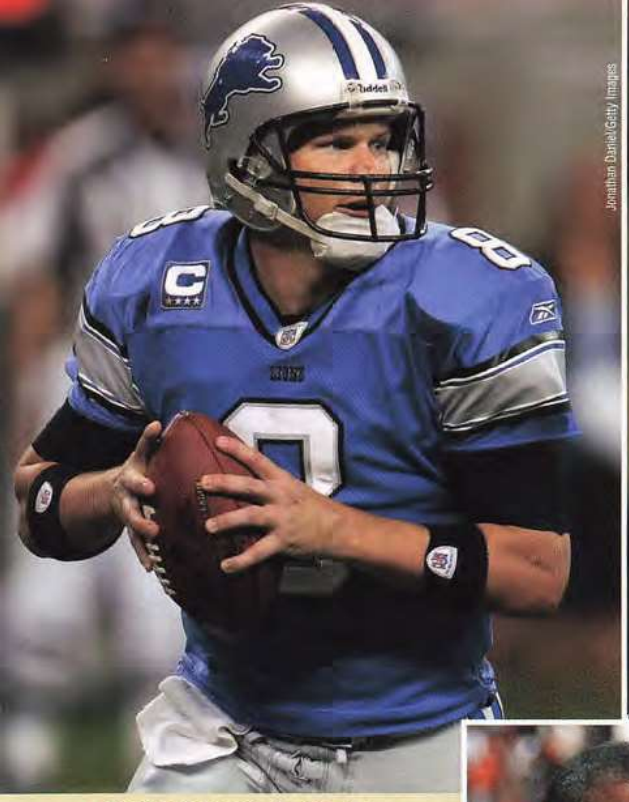
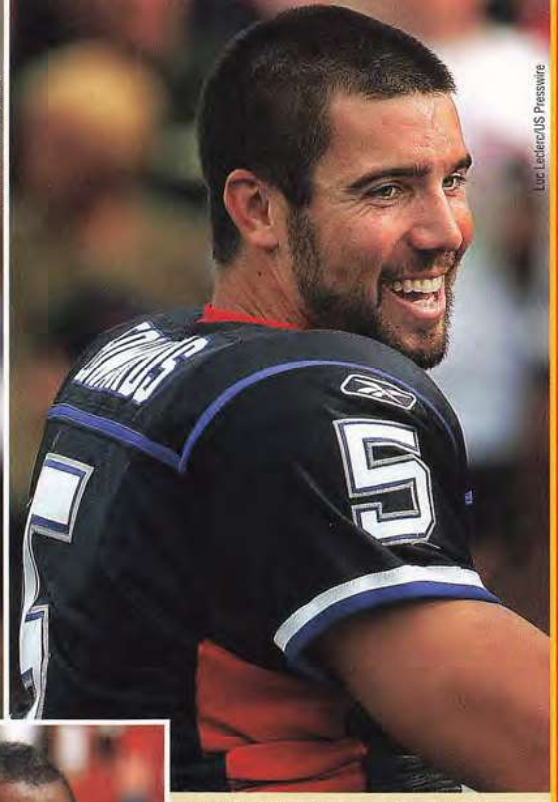


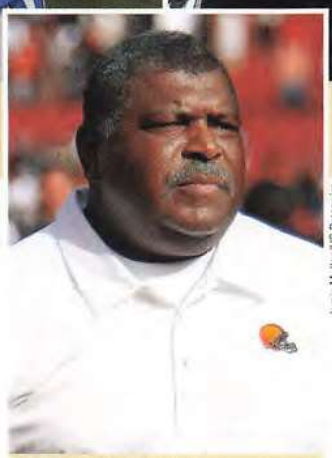
Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

▲ IN THE LIONS' DEN. Jon Kitna's two fourth-quarter TD passes rallied Detroit past visiting Chicago, 37-27.



Luc Leclerc/US Presswire

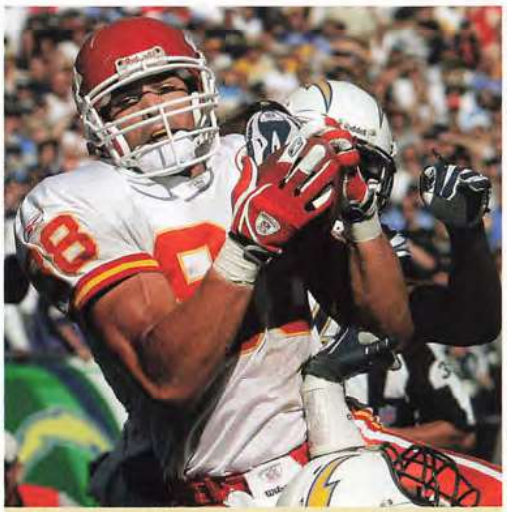
▲ FITTING THE BILL. Trent Edwards' first career start was a success. He threw for 234 yards as Buffalo beat the Jets.



Jamie Mullen/US Presswire

▲ CLEVELAND ROCKS. Romeo Crennel looks on during the Browns' win.

Dolphins legend Dan Marino. Favre later added a 33-yard strike to James Jones. "To win, and get this behind us, is a great feeling," said Favre, who completed 32 of 45 passes and finished with a Week Four-best 344 yards. Green Bay's Aaron Kampman, who had two tackles and a sack in the game, noted, "[Brett] cares about the record, but it's not the most important thing. He cares about winning. That's when you know you have a special teammate." The victory was the Packers' eighth straight regular-season win dating back to the end of 2006.



Lenny Ignelzi/AP WWP

▲ TONY TAKES CHARGE. Tony Gonzalez hauls in a 22-yard touchdown during Kansas City's victory at San Diego.

FABULOUS FOUR-TUNES

Riding a trio of Tom Brady TD passes and 117 rushing yards from Sammy Morris, the Patriots beat the Bengals, 34-13, to remain undefeated and keep their three-game lead in the AFC East... Indianapolis was the AFC's other 4-0 team. After spotting Denver a 10-0 lead, the Colts raced back for a 38-20 triumph. Peyton Manning passed for three TDs, two that were caught by tight end Dallas Clark, and Joseph Addai rushed for 136 yards and another score...Also improving to 4-0 were the NFC East Cowboys, who handled the Rams, 35-7. Tony Romo had three touchdown passes as part of his 339-yard day and added a 15-yard TD run late in the second quarter that accounted for the go-ahead score...Arizona handed the Steelers their first loss of the year, 21-14. Steve Breaston's 73-yard punt return broke a fourth-quarter tie and Edgerrin James provided insurance the Cardinals would need with his 2-yard touchdown run...Daunte Culpepper accounted for all five Raiders TDs—running for three and throwing for two others—in a 35-17 win at Miami. Oakland piled up 299 yards on the ground, 179 of those by Justin Fargas...Matt Hasselbeck threw for 281 yards and Seattle's defense had six first-half sacks to key a 23-3 victory over the 49ers...Derek Anderson fired two first-quarter touchdown passes, setting the pace for the Browns' 27-13 win over Baltimore.

WEEK 4
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Daunte Culpepper (QB, Raiders)
In directing victory at Miami, became just second quarterback in NFL history with three rushing and two passing touchdowns in the same game.

DEFENSE
Jabari Greer (CB, Bills)
Had five tackles, defensed two passes, and added an interception that set up game-winning TD against Jets.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Dave Rayner (K, Chiefs)
Kicked field goals of 21, 25, and 41 yards to help defeat San Diego.

OFFENSE
Brett Favre (QB, Packers)
On the day he became NFL's all-time leader for TD passes, completed 32 of 45 attempts for 344 yards with a 108.0 passer rating to beat Vikings.

DEFENSE
Osi Umenyiora (DE, Giants)
Had career-high and franchise-record six sacks and also forced two fumbles in home victory over Eagles.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Steve Breaston (PR-KR, Cardinals)
Had team's first punt return for a TD since 1993, a 73-yarder that provided go-ahead score against Steelers.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Dwayne Bowe (WR, Chiefs)
Eight catches for 164 yards, among them a 51-yard TD, in win vs. Denver.

"They don't turn the ball over and they don't make many mistakes. You have to play close to perfect..."

~Denver QB Jay Cutler, complimenting the Colts following their 38-20 win over the Broncos.

WEEK 5

CHARGERS STRIKE WITH MILE-HIGH WIN

Sunday, Oct. 7
@ Houston 22 ..... Miami 19
Jacksonville 17 ..... @ Kansas City 7
@ New England 34 ..... Cleveland 17
Carolina 16 ..... @ New Orleans 13
@ N.Y. Giants 35 ..... N.Y Jets 24
@ Pittsburgh 21 ..... Seattle 0
Arizona 34 ..... @ St. Louis 31
@ Tennessee 20 ..... Atlanta 13
@ Washington 34 ..... Detroit 3
@ Indianapolis 33 ..... Tampa Bay 14
San Diego 41 ..... @ Denver 3
Baltimore 9 ..... @ San Francisco 7
Chicago 27 ..... @ Green Bay 20

Monday, Oct. 8
Dallas 25 ..... @ Buffalo 24

Open Dates
Cincinnati, Minnesota, Oakland, Philadelphia

ANXIOUS TO SHAKE OFF A SLOW START AND TAKE AIM ON A SECOND STRAIGHT AFC WEST TITLE, SAN DIEGO UNLEASHED ITS BIGGEST OFFENSIVE OUTBURST OF THE SEASON WHILE ROLLING OVER THE HOST DENVER BRONCOS, 41-3.

The backfield duo of LaDainian Tomlinson and Michael Turner inflicted most of the damage. While Tomlinson was piling up 140 total yards, Turner rushed for a career-high 147, including 74 on a fourth-quarter touchdown.

Philip Rivers threw for a pair of scores and had a 2-yard TD run that put the Chargers on the board midway through the first quarter. It became a 14-0 game just moments later when Brandon Siler recovered a fumble on the ensuing kickoff and brought it back 23 yards for a touchdown.

"[That] was big," said Tomlinson of the two quick scores. "It definitely gained some confidence and momentum for us."

Rivers broke things open with his third-quarter scoring tosses to Antonio Gates and Vincent Jackson, helping San Diego win back-to-back games in Denver for the first time in nearly four decades.

Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

▲ **STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. LaDainian Tomlinson goes for a big gain during the Chargers' win at Denver.**

A PERFECT PAIR

New England and Dallas prepared for their Week Six "Battle of Unbeatens" with distinctly different types of victories. The Patriots won their fifth straight game by 17 or more points, utilizing three Tom Brady touchdown passes and a pair of Junior Seau interceptions to subdue Cleveland, 34-17.

Dallas, meanwhile, had to scramble to escape Buffalo with a win, scoring nine points in the final 20 seconds to edge the Bills, 25-24. Tony Romo, who earlier had thrown five interceptions and lost a fumble, recovered to direct a pair of late drives that kept the Cowboys perfect. "That's a sign of a pretty resilient team," said Romo. "Our team, outside of me, played

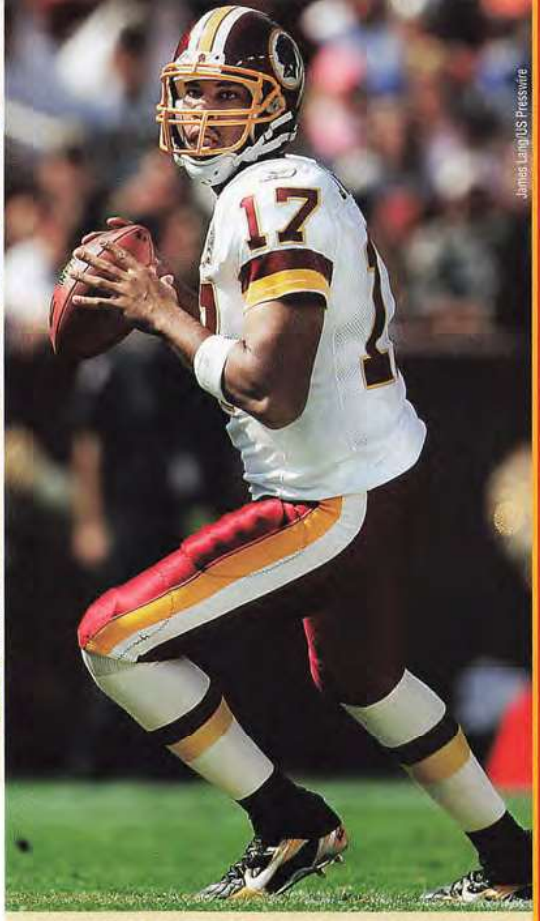
Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

◀ **THREE CHEERS. The Texans' Kris Brown reacts to his 57-yard field goal that beat the Dolphins, 22-19. It was his third field goal of the day from at least 50 yards.**

STANDINGS

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA	NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England	5-0-0	182	65	Dallas	5-0-0	176	96
Buffalo	1-4-0	65	118	Washington	3-1-0	87	52
N.Y. Jets	1-4-0	96	138	N.Y. Giants	3-2-0	123	124
Miami	0-5-0	97	141	Philadelphia	1-3-0	84	73
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**	**NFC NORTH**	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Pittsburgh	4-1-0	132	47	Green Bay	4-1-0	125	93
Baltimore	3-2-0	88	97	Detroit	3-2-0	117	155
Cleveland	2-3-0	126	152	Chicago	2-3-0	87	115
Cincinnati	1-3-0	106	129	Minnesota	1-3-0	67	59
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**	**NFC SOUTH**	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Indianapolis	5-0-0	164	88	Carolina	3-2-0	98	100
Jacksonville	3-1-0	63	41	Tampa Bay	3-2-0	95	77
Tennessee	3-1-0	84	59	Atlanta	1-4-0	69	100
Houston	3-2-0	116	99	New Orleans	0-4-0	51	119
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**	**NFC WEST**	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Oakland	2-2-0	102	100	Arizona	3-2-0	118	111
Denver	2-3-0	75	136	Seattle	3-2-0	87	74
Kansas City	2-3-0	63	83	San Francisco	2-3-0	63	102
San Diego	2-3-0	109	105	St. Louis	0-5-0	70	137

▲ THAT'S THE WAY. Titans head coach Jeff Fisher points to the end zone after Vincent Fuller's interception against Atlanta.



▲ GOOD TO THE LAST THROW. Jason Campbell completed 23 of 29 passes in Washington's victory over Detroit.

▲ CARDINALS CARE. Head coach Ken Whisenhunt sports a breast cancer awareness pin during his team's victory.

an outstanding game. They dug me out of it." Romo's 4-yard TD pass to Patrick Crayton pulled Dallas within 24-22. After the two-point conversion failed, the Cowboys' Tony Curtis recovered the onside kick, and Romo fired two quick completions to set up Nick Folk's 53-yard field goal at the final gun.

STEEL CITY SHUTOUT

Meeting for the first time since Super Bowl XL, Pittsburgh rolled past Seattle, 21-0. The dominating effort saw the Steelers keep the ball for better than 40 minutes while dealing the Seahawks their first shutout since the 2000 season. The game was scoreless until Ben Roethlisberger (18 of 22, 206 yards) connected with Heath Miller for a 13-yard TD just before halftime. Najeh Davenport then accounted for Pittsburgh's two second-half touchdowns with short runs, the first a 1-yarder capping a 17-play, 80-yard drive that chewed nearly 11 minutes off the clock. "Coach [Mike] Tomlin says, 'We've got 53 playmakers, and you've got to make plays when your number is called,'" said Davenport. Through five games, Pittsburgh was allowing a league-low 9.4 ppg and its defense had yet to give up a first-half TD.

STRIVE FOR FIVE

Indianapolis improved to 5-0 by defeating Tampa Bay, 33-14, behind two Peyton Manning TD passes and 121 rushing yards from Kenton Keith, who was making his first career start…Chicago knocked Green Bay from the ranks of the unbeaten by scoring 17 unanswered points for a 27-20 win. The Bears forced five turnovers, and Brian Griese's 34-yard TD pass to Desmond Clark broke a fourth-quarter tie…Kurt Warner threw for one touchdown and ran for another as the Cardinals tripped up the Rams, 34-31 …John Kasay's third field goal of the day, a 52-yarder as time expired, lifted the Panthers over New Orleans, 16-13…Jacksonville surrendered just 10 rushing yards in its 17-7 triumph over Kansas City…The NFL designated Oct. 7-8 Breast Cancer Awareness Weekend with a number of pregame and in-stadium initiatives, including the use of pink Gatorade towels that were later autographed and put up for auction. Proceeds were given to breast cancer charities.

WEEK 5
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Philip Rivers (QB, Chargers)
Completed 13 of 18 passes for 270 yards and two TDs with a 151.4 passer rating, and also rushed for his first touchdown, to help beat Denver.

DEFENSE
Ike Taylor (CB, Steelers)
Five tackles, four passes defensed, and a goal-line interception on the final play of the first half that all contributed to a shutout of Seattle.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Kris Brown (K, Texans)
Perfect on five field goal attempts and tied NFL record with three FGs of at least 50 yards (54, 54, 57) vs. Miami.

OFFENSE
Jason Campbell (QB, Redskins)
Completed passes to eight different receivers while throwing for 248 yards and a pair of touchdowns in victory over Detroit.

DEFENSE
Rod Hood (CB, Cardinals)
Made five tackles, defensed three passes, and had two interceptions, one that he returned 68 yards for the go-ahead TD, in victory at St. Louis.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Nick Folk (K, Cowboys)
Kicked field goals from 47, 29, 37, and then 53 yards–the last one as time expired–as Dallas edged Buffalo.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Nick Folk (K, Cowboys)
Before kicking game-winning field goal against the Bills, gave the Cowboys their final possession with a perfectly executed onside kick.

"He did a little Barry Sanders move there and spun the guy around."

~Jaguars QB David Garrard, describing Maurice Jones-Drew's 52-yard run for a touchdown against the Chiefs.

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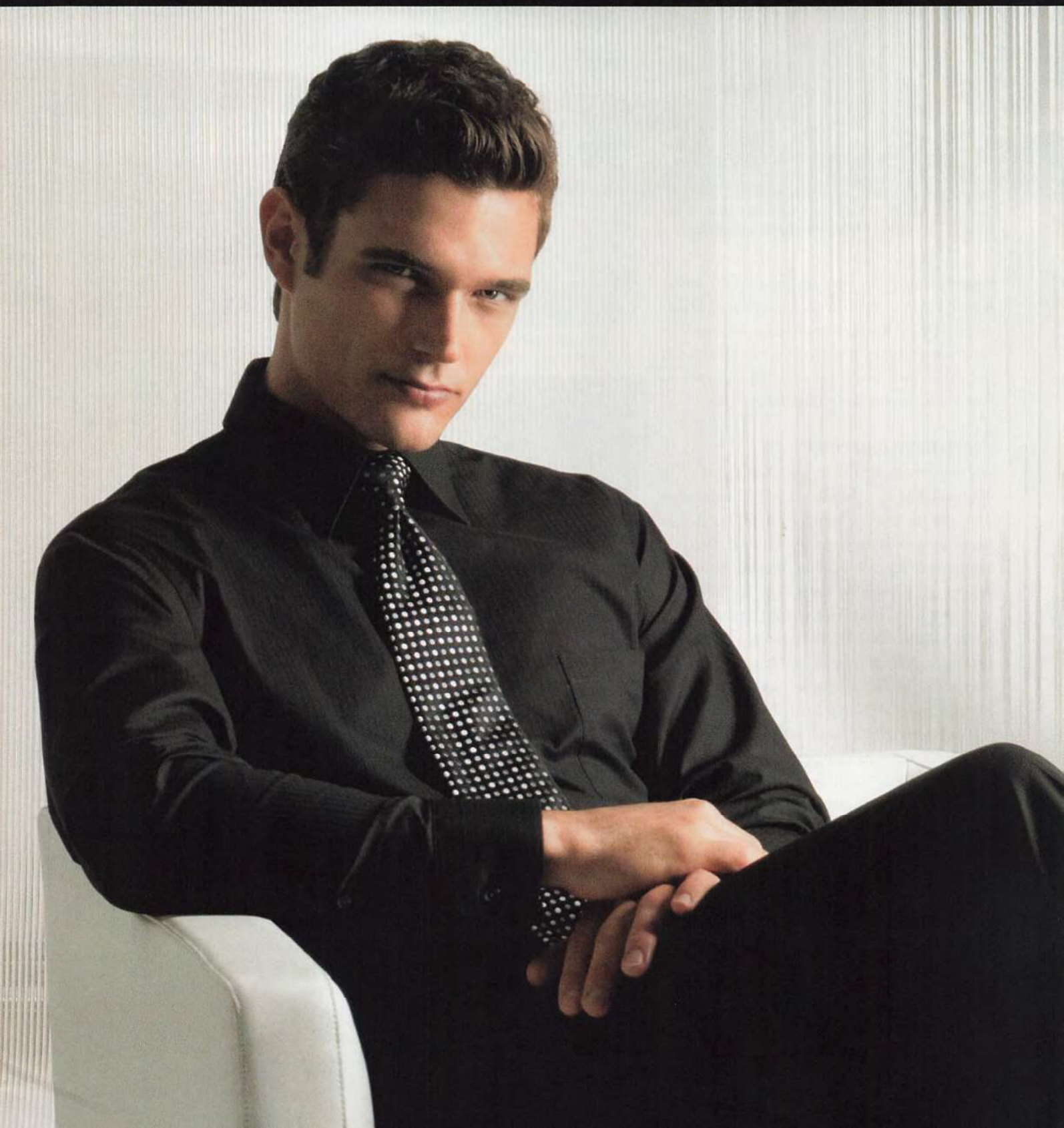


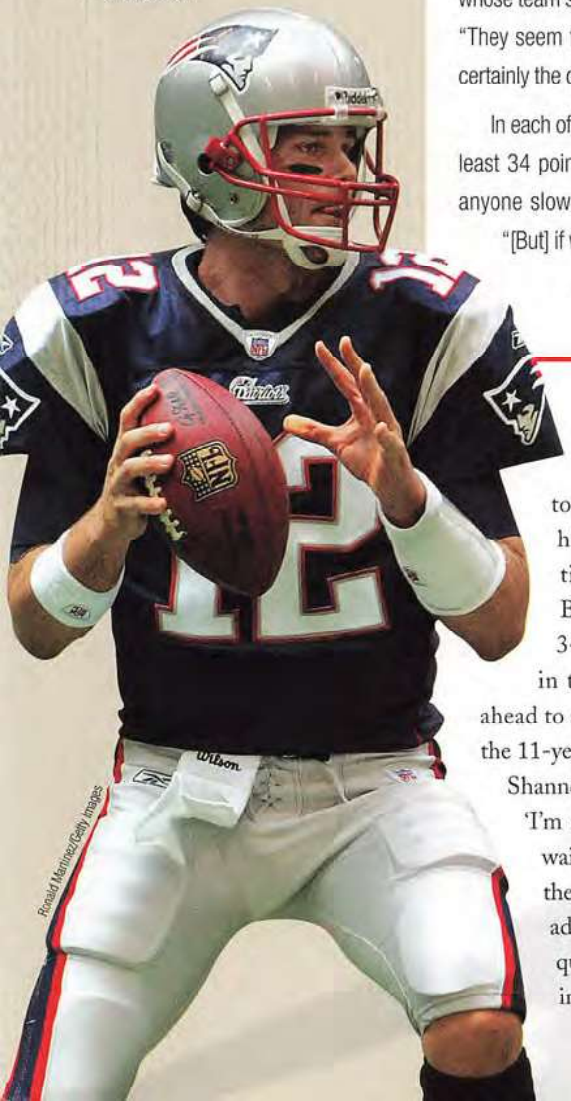
{ WEEK 6 } PATRIOTS PREVAIL IN TEXAS SHOWDOWN

Sunday, Oct. 14
@ Baltimore 22 ..... St. Louis 3
Minnesota 34 ..... @ Chicago 31
@ Cleveland 41 ..... Miami 31
@ Green Bay 17 ..... Washington 14
@ Jacksonville 37 ..... Houston 17
@ Kansas City 27 ..... Cincinnati 20
Philadelphia 16 ..... @ N.Y. Jets 9
@ Tampa Bay 13 ..... Tennessee 10
Carolina 25 ..... @ Arizona 10
New England 48 ..... @ Dallas 27
@ San Diego 28 ..... Oakland 14
New Orleans 28 ..... @ Seattle 17

Monday, Oct. 15
N.Y. Giants 31 ..... @ Atlanta 10

Open Dates
Buffalo, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, San Francisco

▼ **AERIAL SHOW EXTENDED. Tom Brady became the first QB in NFL history to throw three or more touchdowns in each of his team's first six games.**


Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

IN A HIGHLY ANTICIPATED BATTLE OF UNDEFEATED TEAMS, THE PATRIOTS OVERCAME A THIRD-QUARTER DEFICIT AND THEN PULLED AWAY TO BEAT THE COWBOYS. THE WIN LEFT NEW ENGLAND AS ONE OF TWO TEAMS YET TO LOSE IN 2007.

Tom Brady flustered the Dallas defense, throwing a career-high five touchdowns in the 48-27 victory. His 6-yard pass to Randy Moss opened the scoring, and he then connected with Wes Welker for a pair of TD strikes as the Patriots built a 21-10 lead.

When the Cowboys moved ahead briefly, 24-21, on Patrick Crayton's 8-yard touchdown catch, it marked the first time all season New England had trailed in the second half. But the Patriots stormed right back, regaining the lead on their next possession and putting the game away with Brady's 69-yard touchdown throw to Donté Stallworth.

"We tried about everything we could do, almost every coverage and blitz," said Dallas head coach Wade Phillips, whose team slipped to 5-1 but remained atop the NFC East. "They seem to have an answer for everything, and that's certainly the quarterback."

In each of their first six games, the Patriots had scored at least 34 points, prompting the post-game question: Can anyone slow down this high-powered offense? "I don't want to say yes. I don't want to say no," answered Moss. "[But] if we can make it happen in practice against the defense we have, then we can make it happen against anyone."

Indianapolis (5-0), idle on the week, joined New England (6-0) as the only undefeated teams in the league.

Fernando Medina/US Presswire

▲ **SHOWING HIS MO-JO. Maurice Jones-Drew rushed for 125 yards and scored two fourth-quarter TDs against Houston.**

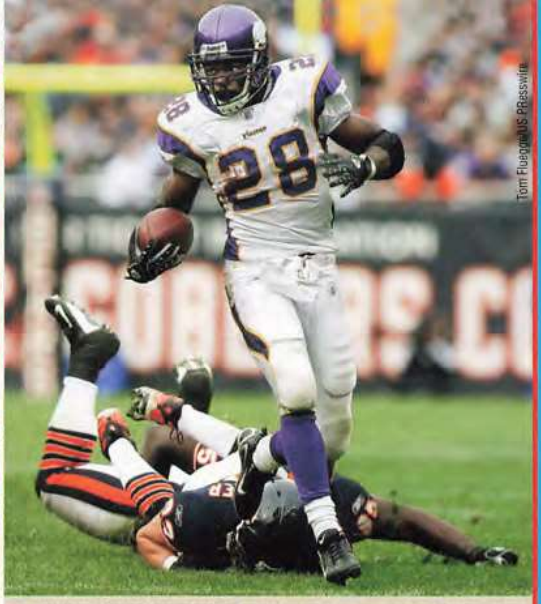
GONZALEZ GETS HIS MARK

Tony Gonzalez caught a pair of touchdown passes, including the 63rd of his career to break the NFL record for tight ends, as the Chiefs tripped up the Bengals, 27-20. The mark was set on a 3-yard TD throw from Damon Huard late in the first quarter that put Kansas City ahead to stay. "It wasn't the easiest [catch]," said the 11-year pro, who topped the standard held by Shannon Sharpe. "I had to go get it. I was like, 'I'm not letting this one get away. I've been waiting a long time for it.'" Gonzalez ended the game with nine receptions for 102 yards, adding a 26-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter as the Chiefs climbed to 3-3 and into a tie atop the AFC West. Kansas City head coach Herman Edwards noted, "It's great for him and for pro football. I've never been a big proponent in talking to players about stats, but Tony is a great football player at that position, [and] he's not just about stats. Tony wants to win."

CAROLINA DREAMING

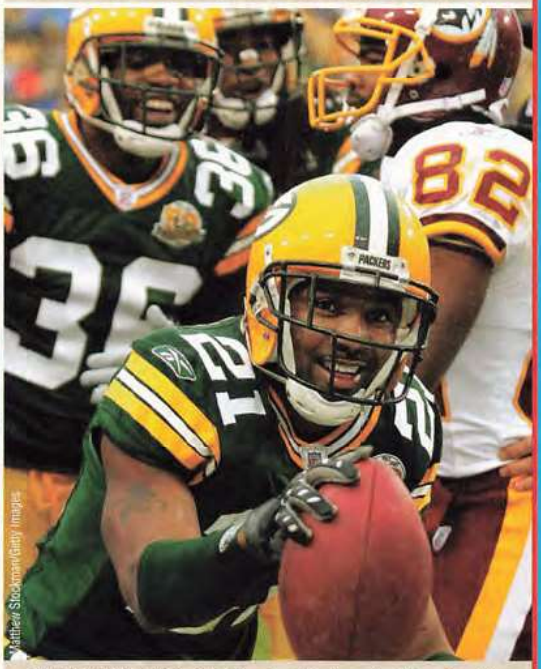
Signed barely a week earlier, Vinny Testaverde found himself starting for the Carolina Panthers in their game at Arizona. And the former No. 1 overall pick made it memorable, becoming the oldest quarterback (at 43 years, 335 days) to start and win an NFL game. Testaverde completed 20 of 33 passes for 206 yards, his performance highlighted by a 65-yard touchdown to Steve Smith that put the Panthers in front for good on their way to a 25-10 triumph. "Our guys rallied around him," said Carolina head coach John Fox. "I

▲ SALUTING THE CHIEFS. Kansas City head coach Herman Edwards is congratulated by the Bengals' Marvin Lewis.



▲ LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER. Adrian Peterson scored on TD runs of 67, 73, and 35 yards in the Vikings' victory.

▲ VINNY VICTORIOUS. In his first start for the Panthers, Vinny Testaverde became the oldest QB to win an NFL game.



▲ THAT'S THREE FOR ME. Charles Woodson had two fumble recoveries and an interception in Green Bay's triumph.

think they saw some of the things he's capable of during the week in practice." Testaverde also added to a league mark he already holds, throwing a TD pass for the 21st consecutive season. DeAngelo Williams rushed for 121 yards, including a 75-yard score late in the game, and John Kasay kicked four field goals as the Panthers (4-2) remained locked in a first-place tie with Tampa Bay in the NFC South.

SIX SHOTS

With its 17-14 win over Washington, Green Bay improved to 5-1 and extended its NFC North lead to 1.5 games…The Giants won their fourth straight game, 31-10 at Atlanta, behind Eli Manning's 303 passing yards and two touchdowns…Jacksonville also extended its winning streak to four with a 37-17 home victory against Houston…Braylon Edwards caught TD passes of 24, 5, and 16 yards, helping Cleveland outpoint the Dolphins, 41-31…LaDainian Tomlinson accounted for all four San Diego TDs while rushing for 198 yards in a 28-14 victory over Oakland…Matt Bryant kicked a 43-yard field goal with 11 seconds to play, lifting the Buccaneers over Tennessee, 13-10…Ryan Longwell's 55-yard FG on the game's final play was the margin in Minnesota's 34-31 win over Chicago…The Ravens' defense forced six turnovers and Matt Stover kicked five field goals in a 22-3 victory over the Rams…Donovan McNabb hooked up with Kevin Curtis for a 75-yard scoring pass, while the Eagles' defense didn't permit a TD despite four drives inside their 20-yard line, in a 16-9 triumph over the Jets…New Orleans cracked the win column, 28-17 over Seattle, thanks to Reggie Bush's 97 rushing yards and six receptions.

WEEK 6
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady (QB, Patriots)
Completed 31 of 46 passes for 388 yards and five touchdowns to help Patriots hand Dallas first loss of year.

DEFENSE
Paul Spicer (DE, Jaguars)
Totaled seven tackles, one sack, one forced fumble, and four QB pressures to help defeat Houston.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Matt Stover (K, Ravens)
Accounted for 15 of team's 22 points with five FGs (43, 42, 23, 31, and 36 yards) and a PAT in win over Rams.

OFFENSE
Adrian Peterson (RB, Vikings)
Rushed for a franchise-record 224 yards and scored on runs of 67, 73, and 35 yards against Chicago.

DEFENSE
Charles Woodson (CB, Packers)
Had an interception and recovered two fumbles, one that he returned for game-winning TD, vs. Washington.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester (WR-PR-KR, Bears)
Scored on an 89-yard punt return, the ninth return TD of his career, and had an 81-yard TD catch vs. Vikings.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Adrian Peterson (RB, Vikings)
Accounted for 351 total yards—224 rushing, 128 on kickoff returns, and nine receiving—in win over Chicago.

"[As] I got more comfortable with the speed of the game, I knew anything was possible."
~Adrian Peterson, after his 224-yard, three-TD rushing effort in the Vikings' win over Chicago.

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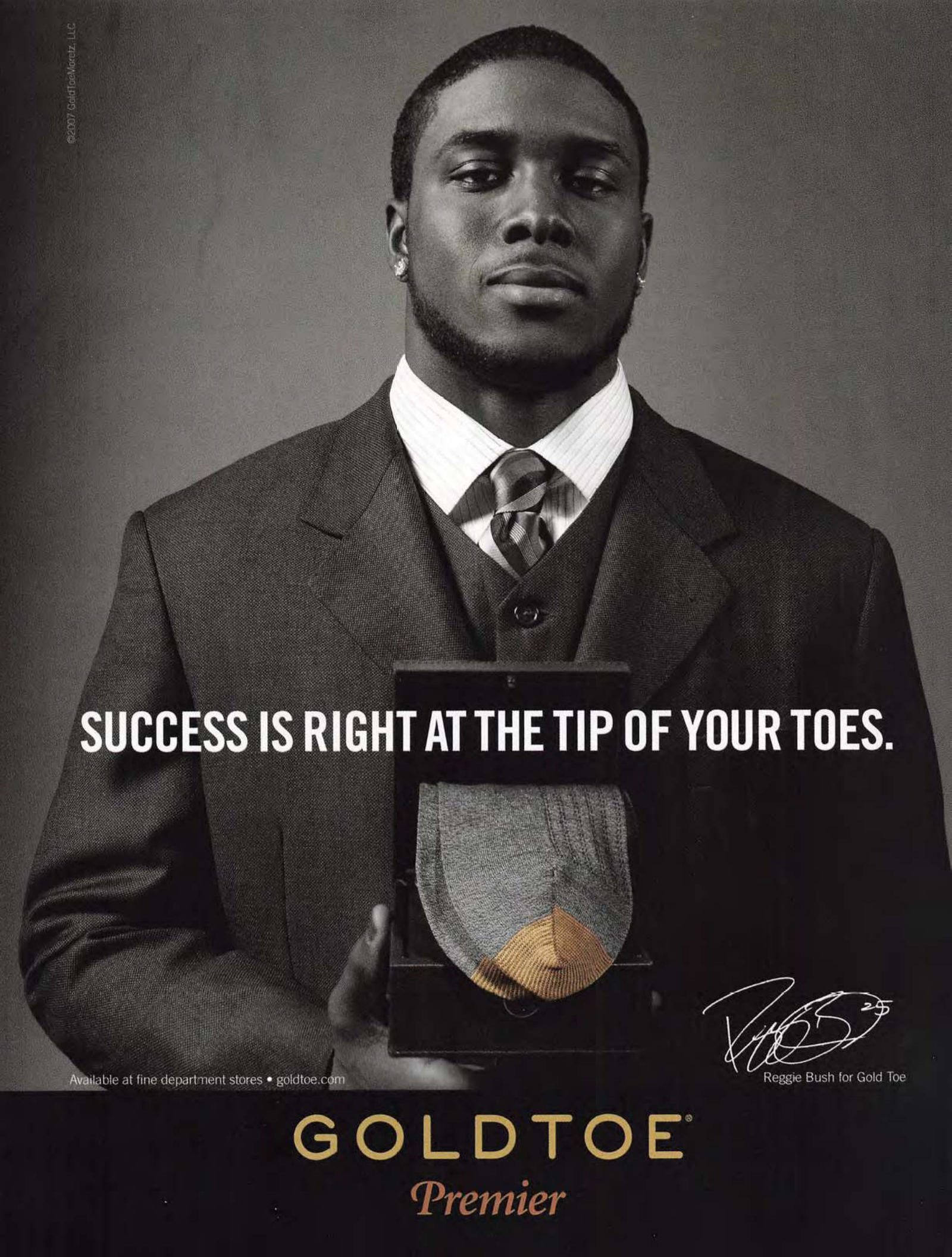
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{ WEEK 7 } SOME WILD ENDINGS AND CLOSE CALLS

Sunday, Oct. 21
@ Buffalo 19.....Baltimore 14
@ Detroit 23.....Tampa Bay 16
Tennessee 38.....@ Houston 36
New England 49.....@ Miami 28
@ N.Y. Giants 33.....San Francisco 15
@ New Orleans 22.....Atlanta 16
@ Washington 21.....Arizona 19
@ Cincinnati 38.....N.Y. Jets 31
Kansas City 12.....@ Oakland 10
@ Dallas 24.....Minnesota 14
Chicago 19.....@ Philadelphia 16
@ Seattle 33.....St. Louis 6
@ Denver 31.....Pittsburgh 28

Monday, Oct. 22
Indianapolis 29.....@ Jacksonville 7

Open Dates
Carolina, Cleveland, Green Bay, San Diego

IT TOOK THE FINAL WHISTLE TO SETTLE MUCH OF THE ACTION IN WEEK SEVEN, WITH THREE TEAMS PULLING OUT VICTORIES IN THE CLOSING SECONDS AND NINE GAMES DECIDED BY NO MORE THAN A TOUCHDOWN.

The hot-spot was Houston, where Rob Bironas set an NFL record by kicking eight field goals. His final one, a 29-yarder as time expired, lifted the visiting Titans to a 38-36 win over the Texans.

Equally amazing were the events leading up to that last kick. Tennessee had built a comfortable 32-7 lead before Houston erupted for 29 fourth-quarter points behind four Sage Rosenfels touchdown passes. His last one, a 53-yard throw to André Davis with 57 seconds remaining, put the Texans in front by a point.

But Tennessee had just enough time to answer back. Starting from his own 20, quarterback Kerry Collins twice connected with Roydell Williams for big gains that put Bironas in range for the game-winner.

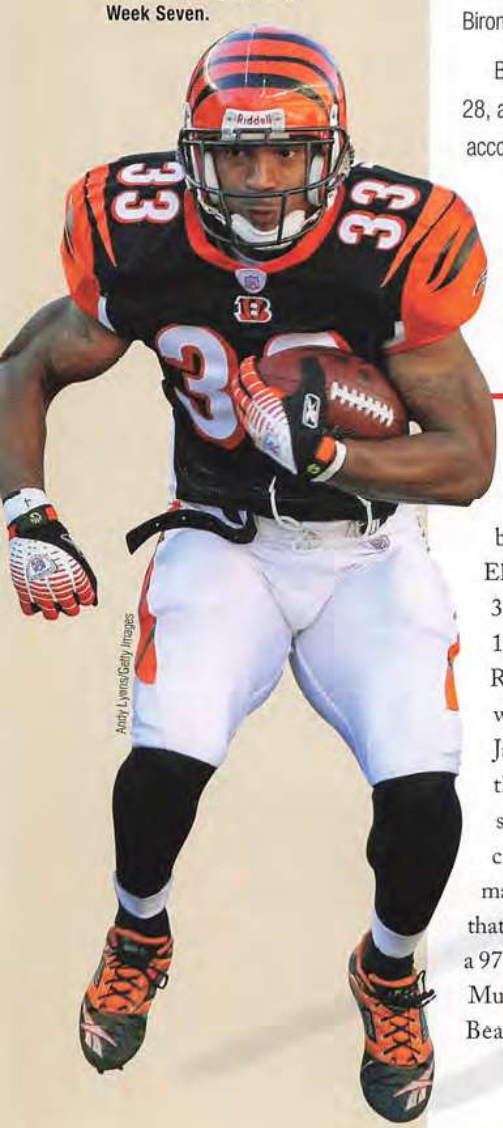
Bironas earlier had made kicks from 52, 43, 25, 21, 30, 28, and 29 yards. He eclipsed the league mark of seven field goals in a game, shared by four players and most recently accomplished by the Cowboys' Billy Cundiff in 2003.

"I knew we'd hit quite a few, but I try not to count," said Bironas, who also broke the NFL single-game record for points by a kicker with 26. "I've never really counted, but I'll remember this one."

The victory pulled Tennessee into a second-place tie with Jacksonville in the AFC South, both teams at 4-2 and trailing undefeated Indianapolis by two games.

Jamie Squire/Getty Images

▲ **EIGHT IS ENOUGH. Rob Bironas is congratulated by Vince Young after setting the NFL mark for field goals in a game.**


Andy Lyons/Getty Images

▼ **TURNING ON THE JETS. Kenny Watson's 130 rushing yards in the Bengals' win led all running backs in Week Seven.**

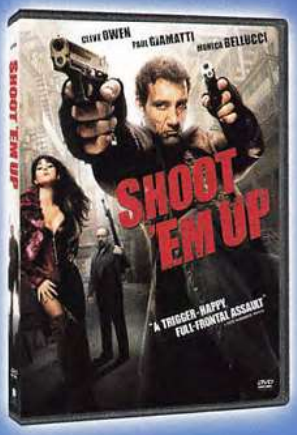
THRILL RIDES

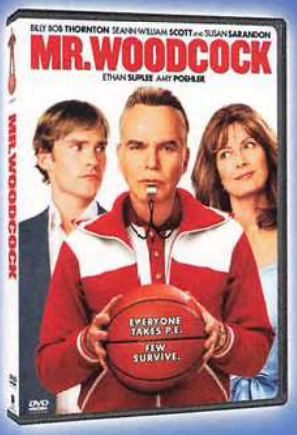
The Broncos joined in the weekend excitement by winning their game on the final play, as Jason Elam's 49-yard field goal tripped up the Steelers, 31-28. Pittsburgh had rallied after trailing by 14 in the final quarter, knotting the game on Ben Roethlisberger's 12-yard throw to Heath Miller with 1:10 remaining. But Denver quarterback Jay Cutler—who had three touchdown passes on the day—conducted a quick 49-yard drive to set up the winning kick. "[Elam] is a darn good closer," said Broncos safety John Lynch, who made six tackles. "You wouldn't want anyone else in that position." In Philadelphia, Brian Griese capped a 97-yard drive by throwing a touchdown to Muhsin Muhammad with nine seconds to play, giving the Bears a 19-16 victory. On that last drive, Griese completed passes to five different receivers as he pinned the Eagles' defense with their first TD allowed in 131 minutes. Washington, meanwhile, survived a frantic charge from the visiting Cardinals to win, 21-19. Clinton Portis' second touchdown of the day seemed to put the Redskins in command, but Arizona drew closer on an Anquan Boldin TD catch, then got within two on Leonard Pope's scoring reception with 21 seconds on the clock. The two-point conversion failed, but Arizona recovered the onside kick, leaving Neil Rackers with a chance to win it, but his 55-yard FG attempt missed wide left.

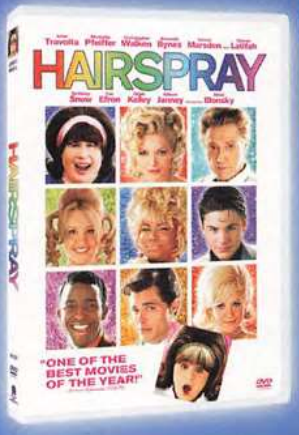
IN FULL STRIDE

By beating the Jaguars on Monday night, the Colts became the third NFL team to start 6-0 in three straight seasons, joining the Packers (1929-31) and

MAKE YOUR PLAY!




BILLY BOB THORNTON SEANN WILLIAM SCOTT and SUSAN SARANDON
MR. WOODCOCK
ETHAN SUPLEE AMY POEHLER
EVERYONE TAKES P.E. FEW SURVIVE.



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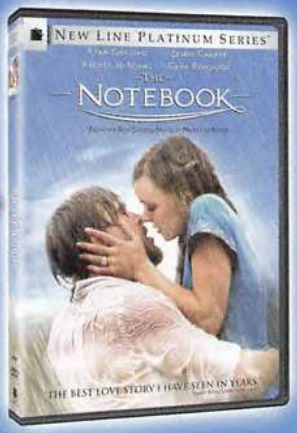

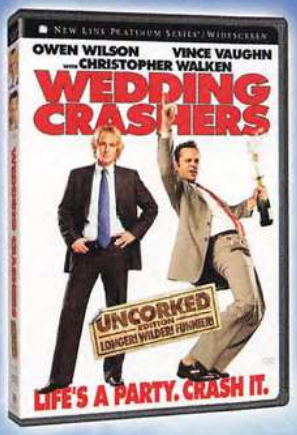
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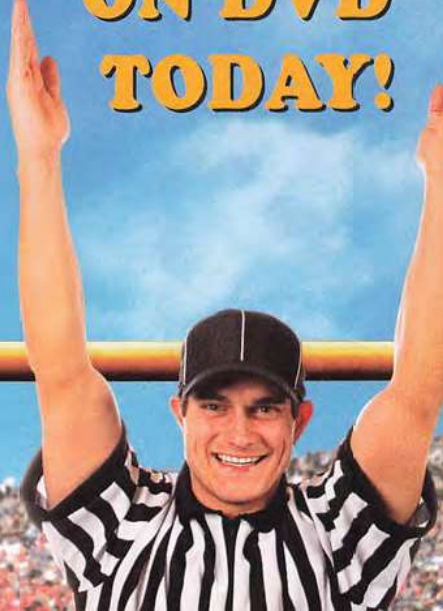

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Tim Heitman/US Presswire

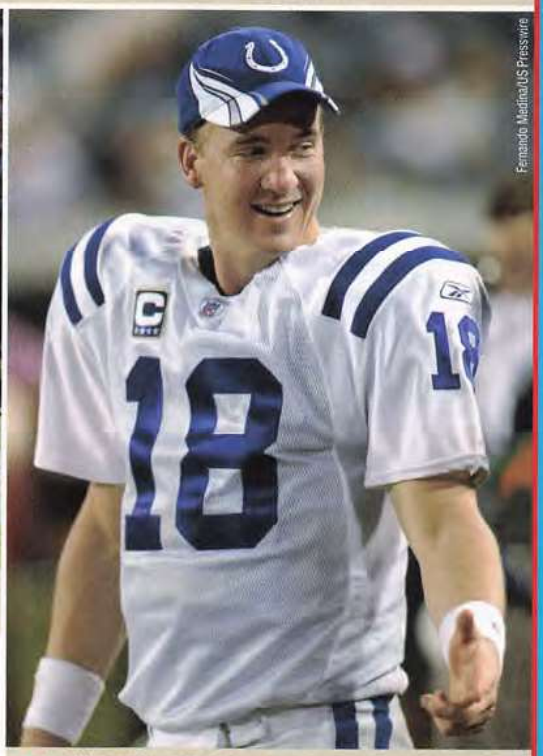
▲ WADE'S WORLD. First-year Dallas coach Wade Phillips watched his team start 6-1.

Jerry Lai/US Presswire

▲ LEAP OF FAITH. Reggie Bush lunges for extra yardage as Michael Boley tries to bring him down during the Saints' 22-16 victory over the Falcons.

James Lang/US Presswire

▲ LONDON'S CALLING. Washington's London Fletcher stretches into the end zone to finish off his 27-yard interception return.



Fernando Medina/US Presswire

▲ CAPPING THE WEEK. Peyton Manning and the Colts stayed undefeated with a Monday night win over the Jaguars.

Rams (1999-2001) in that feat. Indy QB Peyton Manning completed 23 of 37 passes for 259 yards, with Reggie Wayne (9 catches) his favorite target. "This was a pivotal game for us," said Manning. "We put a lot of emphasis on this [one]." The defense rose to the occasion as well. After giving up 375 rushing yards in the last meeting between the teams, the Colts allowed less than a third of that total while forcing three turnovers and recording a safety. Indy led 17-0 at halftime, with touchdown runs by Kenton Keith and Manning capping long drives and Adam Vinatieri adding a 36-yard field goal. "They [Jacksonville] don't really give up too many big plays," said Manning. "They try [to] make you go the long route, and we did that. It was nice to finish some of those drives with touchdowns."

ROLLING SEVENS

The Patriots won in Miami, 49-28, for their first 7-0 start in franchise history. Tom Brady fired six TD passes, five coming before halftime, and finished with 354 yards through the air...Dallas scored 17 second-half points, including Pat Watkins' 68-yard return of a blocked field goal, in their 24-14 win over the Vikings...Brandon Jacobs rushed for 107 yards as the Giants ran their win streak to five games with a 33-15 decision over the 49ers...Johnathan Joseph's 42-yard interception return for a score sealed the Bengals' 38-31 victory over the Jets...Reggie Bush's 5-yard TD reception with 5:04 to play pushed the Saints past Atlanta, 22-16...Detroit's 23-16 win over Tampa Bay came despite being outgained, 422-278. It was the Lions' fourth win of the season, surpassing their entire total from 2006...Rian Lindell's four field goals and Marshawn Lynch's 1-yard touchdown run were enough for Buffalo to edge Baltimore, 19-14 ...Larry Johnson ran for the go-ahead touchdown early in the fourth quarter and the Chiefs held on for a 12-10 win at Oakland.

WEEK 7
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady (QB, Patriots)
Won award for third time on season, completing 21 of 25 passes for 354 yards and setting franchise record with six touchdowns in win at Miami.

DEFENSE
Dwight Freeney (DE, Colts)
Had four tackles, two forced fumbles, and two sacks–one that resulted in a safety–helping Colts improve to 6-0 by beating Jacksonville.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Rob Bironas (K, Titans)
Set NFL record with eight field goals, including the sixth game-winner of his career, and accounted for 20 points in victory at Houston.

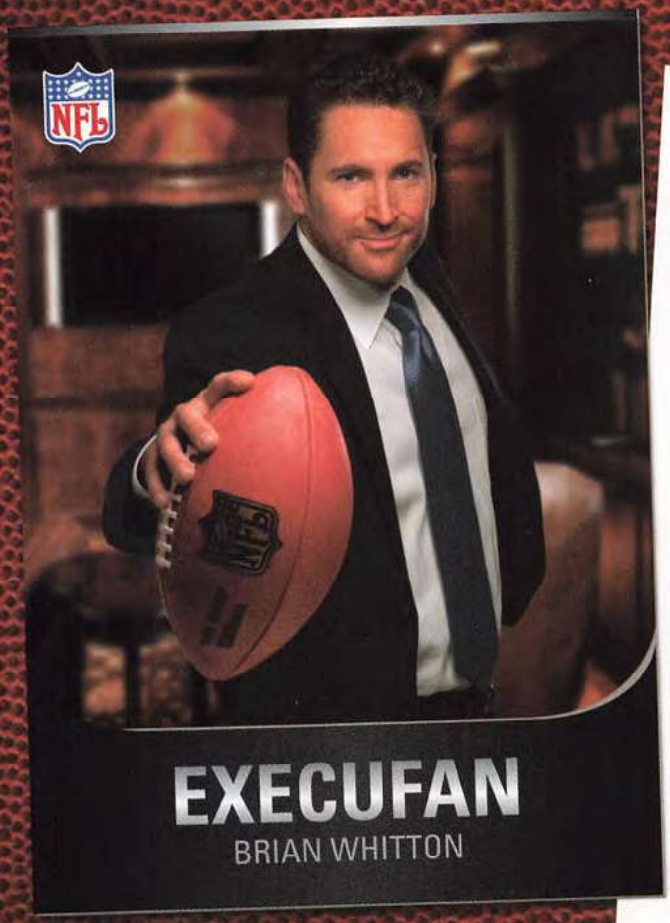
OFFENSE
Brian Griese (QB, Bears)
Completed 27 of 41 passes for 322 yards, and threw a 15-yard TD with nine seconds remaining that lifted Bears past Philadelphia.

DEFENSE
Osi Umenyiora (DE, Giants)
Had a sack, a forced fumble, and two fumble recoveries–both which resulted in New York touchdowns–in victory over San Francisco.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Nate Burleson (PR-KR, Seahawks)
Returned opening kickoff of second half 91 yards for a touchdown, and added a 59-yard punt return, keying Seattle's defeat of St. Louis.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Marshawn Lynch (RB, Bills)
Rushed for 84 yards on 27 carries and scored Buffalo's lone TD–on a 1-yard run late in the third quarter–in victory over Baltimore.

"I don't think I have seen a guy get all four on one play."
–Antonio Pierce, on Osi Umenyiora's sack, forced fumble, fumble recovery, and 75-yard return for a score in the Giants' win over the 49ers.



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04	COLTS	03	00	25	00	51
05	COLTS	07	04	10	04	82
06	COLTS	11	06	02	06	106
07	COLTS	11	08	00	08	153
FAN CAREER		34	18	84	18	438

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WEEK 8

COLTS, PATS PROVIDE A PERFECT SETUP

Sunday, Oct. 28
Indianapolis 31 .....@ Carolina 7
@ Detroit 16 .....Chicago 7
@ Pittsburgh 24.....Cincinnati 13
N.Y. Giants 13...@ Miami 10 (London)
Philadelphia 23 .....@ Minnesota 16
Cleveland 27 .....@ St.Louis 20
@ Tennessee 13.....Oakland 9
Buffalo 13 .....@ N.Y. Jets 3
@ San Diego 35 .....Houston 10
Jacksonville 24 .....@ Tampa Bay 23
@ New England 52.....Washington 7
New Orleans 31..@ San Francisco 10

Monday, Oct. 29
Green Bay 19.....@ Denver 13 (OT)

Open Dates
Arizona, Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Seattle

THERE WAS NO CASE OF LOOKING AHEAD FOR INDIANAPOLIS OR NEW ENGLAND, WHO BOTH OVERWHELMED THEIR WEEK EIGHT FOES TO REMAIN UNDEFEATED AS THEY CHARGED TOWARD THEIR HIGHLY ANTICIPATED SHOWDOWN.

After allowing an early TD, the Colts took command against Carolina. Joseph Addai rushed for 100 yards and scored three times, while Peyton Manning fired a pair of touchdown passes in the 31-7 road triumph.

Adam Vinatieri's 20-yard field goal put Indy on the board, and Addai's 2-yard run made it 10-7 at halftime. Manning built on that margin in the third quarter, throwing a short touchdown pass to Addai, then hitting Reggie Wayne on a 59-yard strike that gave the Colts a 24-7 lead. Addai later added a 12-yard TD jaunt.

While the Colts became the NFL's first team since the 1929-31 Packers to start 7-0 in three straight seasons, they still sat a half-game behind the 8-0 Patriots, who ripped the visiting Redskins, 52-7.

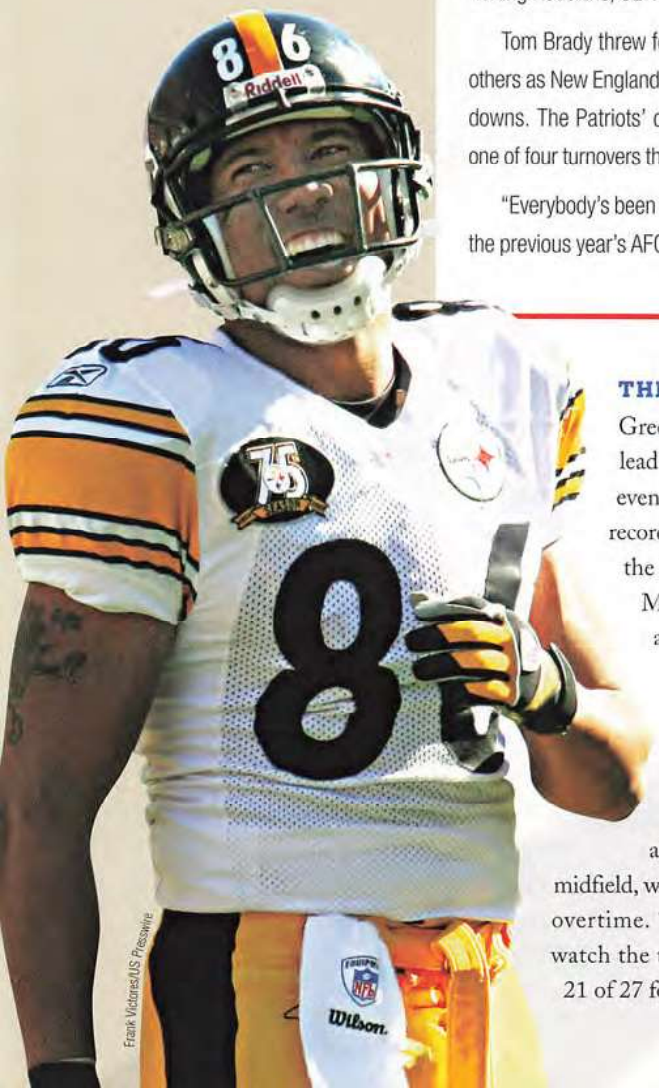
Tom Brady threw for three touchdowns and ran for two others as New England racked up a franchise-record 34 first downs. The Patriots' defense got into the scoring act, too, hitting paydirt on Rosevelt Colvin's 11-yard fumble return—one of four turnovers the team forced on the day—while keeping Washington off the board until the game's final minutes.

"Everybody's been talking about [this game] for a long time, except us," said Manning of the Week Nine contest between the previous year's AFC finalists. "I guess now it is safe to talk about it."

Richard Heathcote/Getty Images

▲ **TRANS-ATLANTIC TD. Eli Manning avoids a diving Jason Taylor to score during the Giants' victory in England.**

▼ **WARD-ING OFF BENGALS. Hines Ward had a pair of TD receptions as part of his eight-catch day in Pittsburgh's win at Cincinnati.**



Frank Victores/US Presswire

THE PACK STRIKES BACK

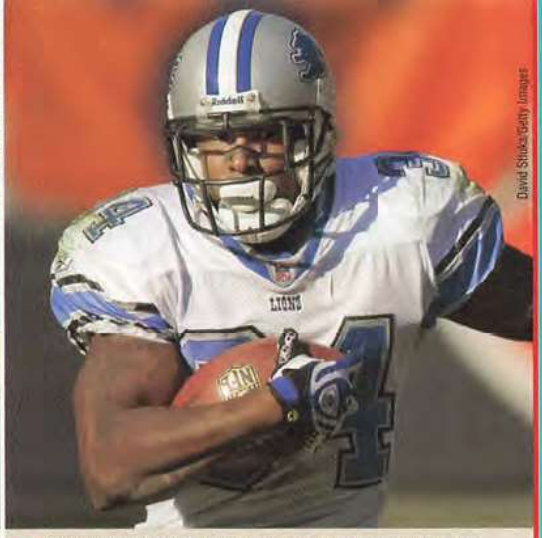
Green Bay (6-1) kept its one-game lead in the NFC North—and pulled even with idle Dallas for the best record in the conference—by beating the Broncos, 19-13, in overtime on Monday night. Brett Favre tossed a pair of long touchdown passes, the second one an 82-yarder to Greg Jennings on the first play of the extra session to win the game. The play, which saw Jennings catch the ball along the left sideline just past midfield, was the second-longest in an NFL overtime. "That was fun. I can't wait to watch the tape," said Favre, who finished 21 of 27 for 331 yards. In the first quarter, Favre connected with James Jones for a 79-yard touchdown that tied the game at 7-7. The teams then traded field goals for the rest of regulation with Denver forcing overtime by driving 89 yards in the final minutes, leading to Jason Elam's 21-yard FG with no time left on the clock. Ryan Grant became Green Bay's first 100-yard rusher of the year, gaining 104 yards on 22 carries. For Favre, it marked the Packers' third 6-1 start with him behind center. One of those other years was 1996, when Green Bay went on to capture Super Bowl XXXI.

A JOLLY GOOD TIME

In the first NFL regular-season game played outside North America, the Giants held off the Dolphins, 13-10, in front of 81,176 fans who braved a chilly rain at England's Wembley Stadium. Quarterback Eli Manning ran for the Giants' lone touchdown, a

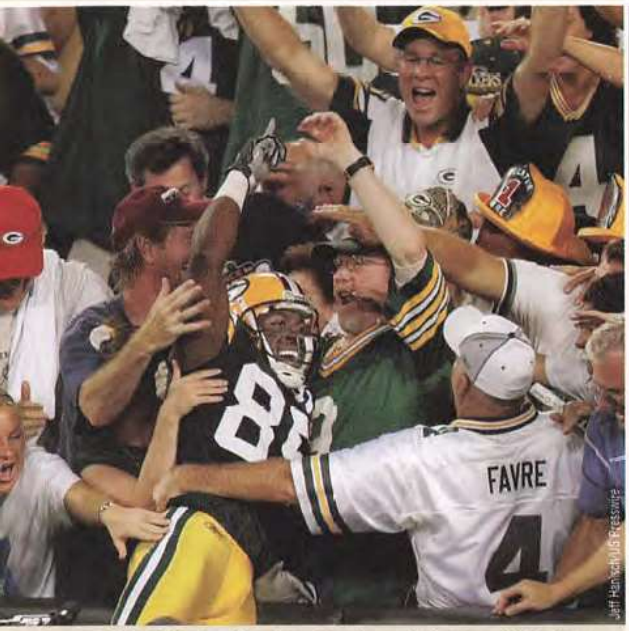
Drew Hallowell/Getty Images

▲ COACHES' ROUNDTABLE. Minnesota's Brad Childress (left) talks with the Eagles' Andy Reid before Philadelphia's win.



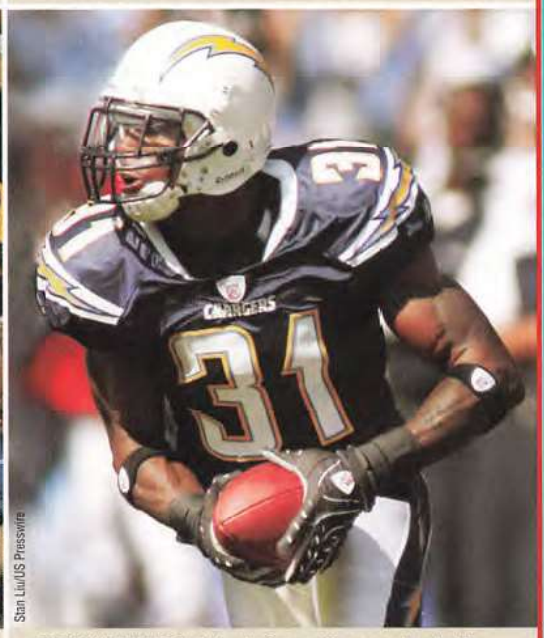
David Stluka/Getty Images

▲ LION ON THE LOOSE. Kevin Jones picks up yardage as part of his big afternoon in Detroit's victory at Chicago.



Jeff Haynes/US Presswire

▲ ROAD RAVE. Receiver Greg Jennings celebrates with Packers fans after his touchdown catch beat host Denver in overtime.



Stan Liu/US Presswire

▲ POSITIVE CHARGE. Antonio Cromartie scored on both a fumble return and interception return in San Diego's win.

10-yard scamper in the second quarter sandwiched between a pair of Lawrence Tynes field goals. Jay Feely put Miami on the board with his 29-yard FG in the third quarter, and the Dolphins made things interesting when Cleo Lemon found Ted Ginn Jr. free for a 21-yard touchdown pass with 1:54 left. But when the ensuing onside kick rolled out of bounds, the Giants took possession and were able to run out the clock. "It was a great atmosphere," said Manning. "The crowd was really into the game. They were cheering any play being made. It was fun to be in the stadium." Brandon Jacobs rushed for 131 yards for the Giants, who won their sixth straight game.

WEEK EIGHT EXTRAS

Cleveland clawed back from an early 14-point deficit against the Rams and took the lead for good on Derek Anderson's 5-yard touchdown pass to Braylon Edwards midway through the third quarter of its 27-20 win...Kevin Jones rushed for 105 yards and scored a second-quarter touchdown as Detroit beat the Bears, 16-7, giving the Lions their first 5-2 start since 2000...LenDale White netted 133 yards on the ground and Chris Henry scored the game's lone TD on a 24-yard run as the Titans nipped the Raiders, 13-9...Donovan McNabb passed for 333 yards and Brian Westbrook scored twice as the Eagles slipped past Minnesota, 23-16...Quinn Gray's 8-yard TD throw to Matt Jones early in the fourth quarter lifted Jacksonville to a 24-23 triumph over intrastate rival Tampa Bay...San Diego struck for five first-half touchdowns, two on Philip Rivers-to-Antonio Gates passes, to beat the Texans, 35-10, and move into a first-place tie with Kansas City in the AFC West ...San Diego Chargers owners Alex and Dean Spanos made a $1 million commitment to aid victims and support the area's firefighting efforts following the devastating wildfires that struck San Diego County. In addition, the NFL announced a $250,000 donation to the Chargers Fire Relief Fund.

WEEK 8
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Joseph Addai (RB, Colts)
Rushed for 100 yards on 23 carries and scored three times, twice on the ground and once through the air, in win at Carolina.

DEFENSE
Mike Vrabel (LB, Patriots)
Big effort on both sides of ball with 13 tackles, three sacks, and three forced fumbles, while also catching a TD pass to help beat Washington.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Mike Scifres (P, Chargers)
Pinned the Texans inside their own 20 on all five of his punts and averaged 50.2 net yards in team's victory.

OFFENSE
Drew Brees (QB, Saints)
Completed 31 of 39 passes for 336 yards with four touchdowns and no interceptions, earning a 136.8 passer rating, in win at San Francisco.

DEFENSE
Trent Cole (DE, Eagles)
Stalwart in victory over Vikings with 13 tackles, three tackles for loss, and two sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Jason Hanson (K, Lions)
Kicked three field goals, highlighted by a 52-yarder in the second quarter of division triumph at Chicago.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
James Jones (WR, Packers)
Caught three passes for 107 yards, including a 79-yard TD for team's first score, in overtime win at Denver.

"We played with more to prove than just to win. We wanted this win for the city of San Diego."
~TE Antonio Gates, on the Chargers' victory providing a lift to a city ravaged by wildfires.

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WEEK 9

A MEMORABLE DAY IN MANY WAYS

Sunday, Nov. 4
@ Atlanta 20 .....San Francisco 16
@ Buffalo 33 .....Cincinnati 21
@ Detroit 44 .....Denver 7
Green Bay 33 .....@ Kansas City 22
@ Minnesota 35 .....San Diego 17
@ New Orleans 41 ....Jacksonville 24
Washington 23.....@ N.Y. Jets 20 (OT)
@ Tampa Bay 17 .....Arizona 10
@ Tennessee 20.....Carolina 7
@ Cleveland 33.....Seattle 30 (OT)
New England 24 .....@ Indianapolis 20
Houston 24.....@ Oakland 17
Dallas 38.....@ Philadelphia 17

Monday, Nov. 5
@ Pittsburgh 38 .....Baltimore 7

Open Dates
Chicago, Miami, N.Y. Giants, St. Louis

WHILE MUCH OF THE FOOTBALL WORLD'S ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON THE PATRIOTS-COLTS BATTLE OF UNBEATENS, THIS ACTION-PACKED WEEKEND WAS FILLED WITH SEVERAL GREAT PERFORMANCES AND A BIT OF GRIDIRON HISTORY.

In the NFL's latest in-season meeting of undefeated teams since 1921, it was New England that came out of the RCA Dome with its record intact. The Patriots (9-0) rallied for two late touchdowns to grab a 24-20 victory over the defending Super Bowl champions.

Trailing by 10 after Colts QB Peyton Manning scored on a 1-yard run, New England pulled closer on Tom Brady's 3-yard TD pass to Wes Welker and took the lead with 3:15 remaining when Brady found Kevin Faulk in the end zone for a 13-yard score. The Patriots then stopped Indianapolis' final threat when Rosevelt Colvin recovered a fumble near midfield.

"Some victories do feel better than others," admitted Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi. "This was one of those that we'll remember. It was a big one."

More big news took place in Minnesota, where the Vikings streaked past San Diego, 35-17. Rookie Adrian Peterson rushed for an NFL-record 296 yards in the win and scored on runs of 1, 64, and 46 yards. He bypassed the mark of 295 yards, set by Jamal Lewis in 2003, on a 3-yard carry with a minute to play. "Oh, no. I was out playing ball," said Peterson when asked if he knew he was so close to history. "I wasn't thinking about the record at all."

In the same game, the Chargers' Antonio Cromartie set a league record for longest play when he returned a missed field goal 109 yards for a touchdown. And history was nearly made in Oakland, where Sebastian Janikowski's 64-yard field goal attempt had plenty of distance but struck the right upright.

David Stluka/Getty Images

▲ **LAST OF THE UNBEATENS. Laurence Maroney and the Patriots clipped the Colts as they improved to 9-0.**

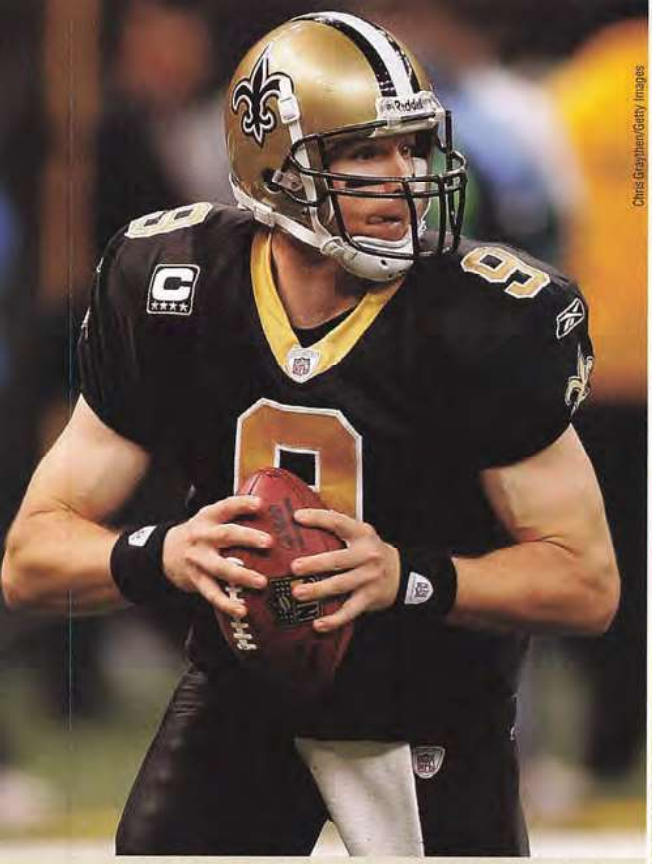
Drew Hallowell/Getty Images

STARRING ROLE ▶ With 10 catches, Terrell Owens played a big part in the Cowboys' 38-17 victory over the Eagles.

STANDINGS

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England	9-0-0	355	147
Buffalo	4-4-0	130	156
N.Y. Jets	1-8-0	159	228
Miami	0-8-0	166	244
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Pittsburgh	6-2-0	222	98
Cleveland	5-3-0	227	233
Baltimore	4-4-0	131	157
Cincinnati	2-6-0	198	244
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Indianapolis	7-1-0	244	126
Tennessee	6-2-0	165	124
Jacksonville	5-3-0	155	151
Houston	4-5-0	203	226
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Kansas City	4-4-0	124	146
San Diego	4-4-0	189	164
Denver	3-5-0	126	227
Oakland	2-6-0	152	177

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Dallas	7-1-0	265	175
N.Y. Giants	6-2-0	200	159
Washington	5-3-0	152	160
Philadelphia	3-5-0	156	155
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Green Bay	7-1-0	194	142
Detroit	6-2-0	200	185
Chicago	3-5-0	144	181
Minnesota	3-5-0	166	154
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Tampa Bay	5-4-0	164	144
Carolina	4-4-0	137	161
New Orleans	4-4-0	173	186
Atlanta	2-6-0	115	169
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Seattle	4-4-0	167	141
Arizona	3-5-0	157	174
San Francisco	2-6-0	104	186
St. Louis	0-8-0	99	219

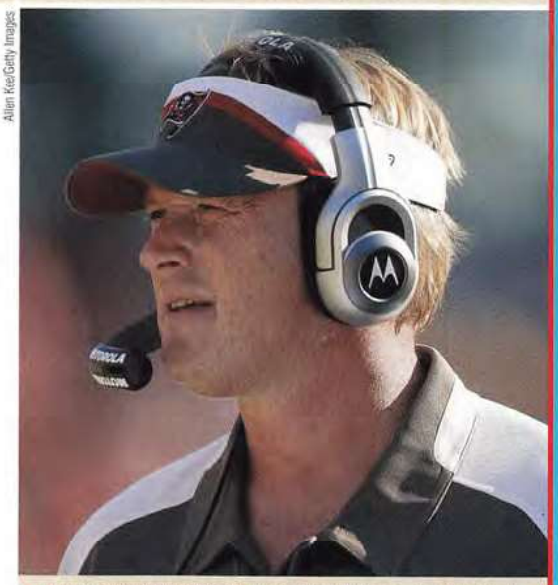


Chris Graythen/Getty Images

▲ SURGING SAINTS. Drew Brees threw for 445 yards and three touchdowns as New Orleans won for the fourth straight time.

Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images

▲ SHAUN IN STRIDE. Shaun Rogers rumbles 66 yards for a touchdown after making an interception in Detroit's win.



Allen Kee/Getty Images

▲ THE LOOK FROM ABOVE. By beating Arizona, Jon Gruden's Buccaneers moved into first place in the NFC South.

A CHANGE OF SEASONS

The Lions (6-2), Buccaneers (5-4), and Browns (5-3) were three of the teams to exceed their entire 2006 win total by midway through 2007. Detroit dominated the Broncos, 44-7, behind two Jon Kitna TD passes and a pair of defensive scores. "This is real," said defensive tackle Cory Redding, who helped the Lions stay within a game of Green Bay in the NFC North race. Tampa Bay moved atop the NFC South standings by beating the Cardinals, 17-10. The Bucs scored on Jeff Garcia's 37-yard pass to Joey Galloway, a 32-yard Matt Bryant field goal, and Earnest Graham's 2-yard run. Graham ended the day with 124 yards, the first 100-yard game of his career. Cleveland, meanwhile, fought back from a 15-point deficit to edge Seattle in overtime, 33-30. The win kept the Browns hot on the trail of the AFC North-leading Steelers. "We became a team today," said Phil Dawson, whose 25-yard field goal was the difference. "The offense moved the ball. The defense stopped them, and we were feeding off one another." Jamal Lewis scored all four Cleveland touchdowns in the victory.

WEEK NINE NOTES

Dallas improved to 7-1 for the first time in 12 years by beating the Eagles, 38-17. Terrell Owens caught 10 passes, including a 45-yard TD grab that gave the Cowboys a 28-7 third-quarter lead…Green Bay also climbed to 7-1, erupting for 17 points in the game's final 3:02 for a 33-22 win at Kansas City. The Packers took the lead on Brett Favre's 60-yard toss to Greg Jennings. After Mason Crosby kicked a 45-yard FG, Charles Woodson put the game out of reach with his 46-yard interception return for a touchdown…Buffalo likewise tallied the final 17 points to knock off the Bengals, 33-21. Marshawn Lynch capped the Bills' rally with a 56-yard touchdown run…Pittsburgh took care of business early, with Ben Roethlisberger throwing five TD passes and the defense coming up with four turnovers before halftime, and cruised to a 38-7 win over Baltimore…Clinton Portis ran for 196 yards in Washington's 23-20 OT win over the Jets.

WEEK 9
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Randy Moss (WR, Patriots)
Made nine receptions for 145 yards (16.1 avg), including a 4-yard TD catch, in victory at Indianapolis.

DEFENSE
James Harrison (LB, Steelers)
Monster game with 3.5 sacks, nine tackles, two forced fumbles, and an interception in win over Ravens.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Antonio Cromartie (CB, Chargers)
Registered longest play in NFL history with a 109-yard return of a missed field goal for a TD against Minnesota.

OFFENSE
Adrian Peterson (RB, Vikings)
Rushed for a league-record 296 yards on 30 carries (9.9 avg) and scored three times to help beat Chargers.

DEFENSE
Shaun Rogers (DT, Lions)
Had 2.5 sacks and first interception of his career—which he returned 66 yards for a TD—in win over Denver.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Shaun Suisham (K, Redskins)
Made all five of his FG attempts (from 46, 40, 22, 40, and 46 yards), the last of which beat the Jets in overtime.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Adrian Peterson (RB, Vikings)
First rookie in NFL history with two 200-yard rushing games, with 253 coming in second half vs. San Diego.

"An 0-4 start is going to do one of two things. It's either going to throw you in the tank or give you an edge."
~QB Drew Brees, after the Saints defeated Jacksonville to improve to 4-4.

{WEEK 10} COWBOYS, STEELERS STRETCH OUT LEADS

Sunday, Nov. 11

Atlanta 20	@ Carolina 13
@ Green Bay 34	Minnesota 0
Denver 27	@ Kansas City 11
Buffalo 13	@ Miami 10
St. Louis 37	@ New Orleans 29
@ Pittsburgh 31	Cleveland 28
Jacksonville 28	@ Tennessee 13
Philadelphia 33	@ Washington 25
Cincinnati 21	@ Baltimore 7
@ Arizona 31	Detroit 21
Dallas 31	@ N.Y. Giants 20
Chicago 17	@ Oakland 6
@ San Diego 23	Indianapolis 21

Monday, Nov. 12

@ Seattle 24	San Francisco 0

Open Dates

Houston, New England, N.Y. Jets, Tampa Bay

▼ **CENTURY MAN. Willie Parker posted his sixth 100-yard rushing game of the season, picking up 105 in the Steelers' victory.**

George Gojkovich/Getty Images

ON A WEEKEND MARKED BY INTRA-DIVISIONAL SHOWDOWNS, DALLAS AND PITTSBURGH SCORED THE BIGGEST WINS OF ALL BY KNOCKING OFF THEIR CLOSEST COMPETITORS, WHILE THE RACE IN THE AFC SOUTH GOT A WHOLE LOT TIGHTER.

The Cowboys edged the Giants to build a two-game cushion in the NFC East. Tony Romo fired four TD passes for Dallas (8-1), which broke open a tie game in the second half to earn a 31-20 win and a sweep of the season series.

Lawrence Tynes' 40-yard field goal had pulled the Giants even, 17-17, before Romo connected with Terrell Owens on a go-ahead 25-yard strike midway through the third quarter. Owens later caught a 50-yard touchdown pass.

"A win like [this] just adds to your confidence," said Romo. "It lets you know you have a chance to do something special."

The Steelers (7-2) needed to rally twice to knock off the Browns, 31-28. It was Pittsburgh's ninth straight series win and pushed the team's lead in the AFC North to two games.

After Braylon Edwards' 16-yard touchdown catch gave Cleveland a 21-6 lead, Pittsburgh battled back. Jeff Reed kicked a 30-yard field goal, Hines Ward caught a 12-yard TD pass, and the Steelers moved ahead on quarterback Ben Roethlisberger's 30-yard scamper early in the fourth quarter. Cleveland regained the upper hand on Joshua Cribbs' 100-yard kickoff return, but Roethlisberger came through with the game-winning drive, capped by his 2-yard touchdown throw to Heath Miller with 3:13 to play.

Jacksonville defeated Tennessee to put both teams at 6-3, just one game behind Indianapolis in the AFC South. The Jaguars' Fred Taylor topped 10,000 career rushing yards and scored on a 4-yard run in the win.

Mike McCarn/AP WWP

▲ **ALGE ALL THE WAY. Atlanta's Alge Crumpler races to the end zone for the game-winning TD against Carolina.**

SHUTOUT SHOWS

Two division leaders blanked their Week 10 opponents. The Packers (8-1) held the Vikings' Adrian Peterson—who one week earlier set the league record for rushing yards in a game—to just 45 yards in their 34-0 rout. It was Green Bay's first shutout in nearly five years, but the defense had to share the spotlight with Brett Favre, who became the second NFL quarterback to top 60,000 career passing yards. "Today was awesome, but there's so much more left for us to do," said Favre after the Packers increased their NFC North lead to two games over Detroit. The Seahawks were even stingier on defense, limiting the 49ers to six first downs and 173 total yards in their 24-0 triumph. The win kept Seattle (5-4) a game ahead of the Cardinals in the NFC West. "We should be successful like this all the time," said linebacker Julian Peterson, who had one of Seattle's three sacks in the game. "This shows how dominant we can be." Matt Hasselbeck (27 of 40, 278 yards) completed passes to eight different receivers and connected with Will Heller and D.J. Hackett for touchdowns.

SUSPENSE IN SAN DIEGO

San Diego moved atop the AFC West by racing out to a big lead against Indianapolis and then holding on in the final minutes for a 23-21 victory. The Chargers (5-4) received huge efforts from Darren Sproles, who became the first player in five seasons to return a punt and a kickoff for touchdowns in the same game, and linebacker Antonio Cromartie, who had three of the team's six interceptions. Sproles opened the game by scoring on an 89-yard kickoff return,

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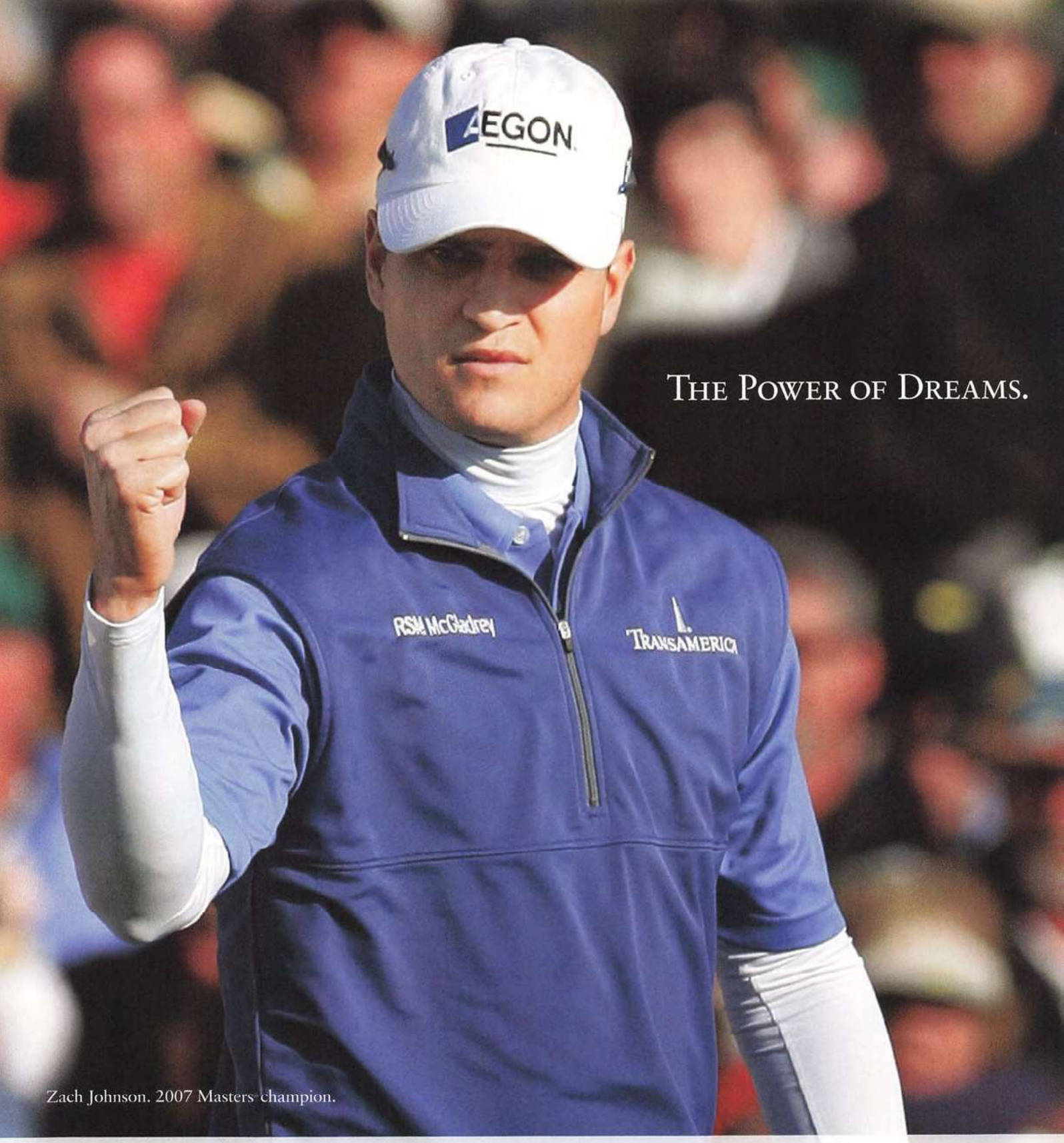

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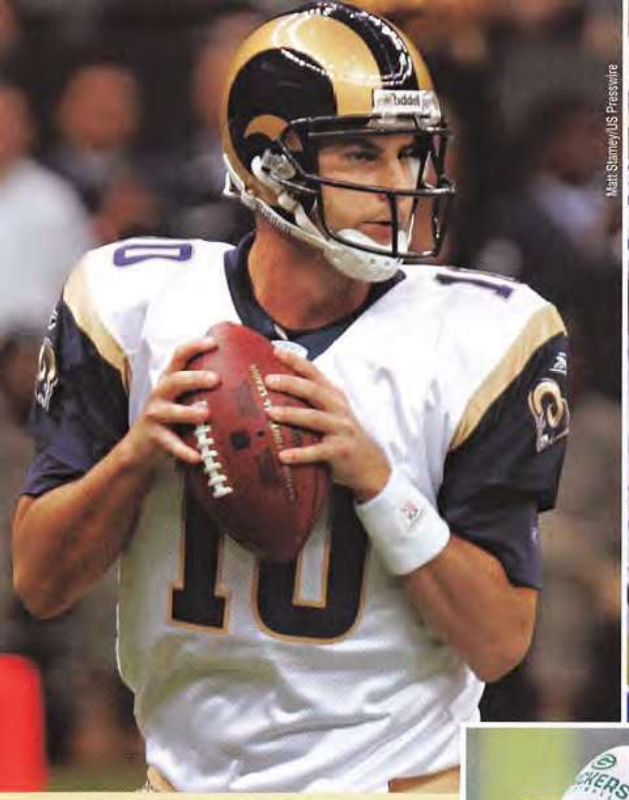
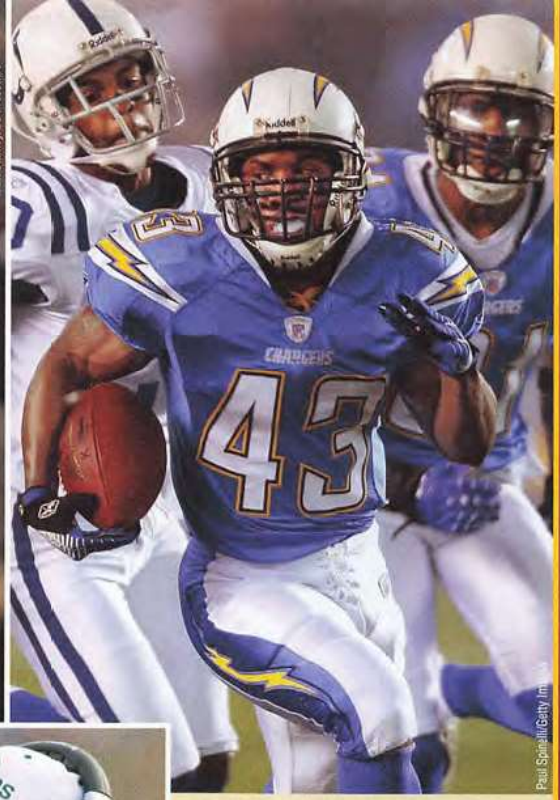


Matt Slumey/US Presswire

▲ MARC ONE UP. Marc Bulger and the Rams had a big day in the "Big Easy" as St. Louis won its first game.



Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

▲ RETURN DELIVERY. The Chargers' Darren Sproles brings back the opening kickoff against the Colts for a score.

David Stluka/Getty Images

▲ PACK-MAN. Coach Mike McCarthy likes the look of his surging squad.

and his 45-yard punt return later in the quarter put San Diego in front 16-0. After a LaDainian Tomlinson 4-yard TD run made the score 23-0, the Colts fought back. Peyton Manning threw a pair of scoring passes, and Indy pulled within two points early in the fourth quarter when linebacker Gary Brackett recovered a fumble in the end zone for a touchdown, but the ensuing two-point conversion attempt failed. The Chargers staved off one late threat when Adam Vinatieri missed a 29-yard field goal with 1:31 to play, then sewed up the game on Clinton Hart's interception. "We finally broke through," said Sproles. "I felt like for a long time we've been close. It finally happened."

James Lang/US Presswire

▲ HITTING TWENTY-ONE. Shayne Graham kicks the last of his seven field goals in the Bengals' win over Baltimore.

WEEK TEN-DENCIES

Buffalo won its fourth consecutive game, rallying late on Marshawn Lynch's 3-yard TD run and Rian Lindell's 34-yard field goal to defeat the Dolphins, 13-10…Donovan McNabb's 57-yard touchdown pass to Brian Westbrook with 3:16 remaining put the Eagles ahead to stay in their 33-25 win over the Redskins. Westbrook later added a 10-yard scoring run…Chicago tallied two late touchdowns for a 17-6 triumph at Oakland. The go-ahead points came on Rex Grossman's 59-yard throw to Bernard Berrian with 3:11 to play, and Cedric Benson added insurance with his 3-yard scoring run two minutes later…The Rams won their first game of the season thanks in part to Steven Jackson, who both rushed and threw for TDs in the 37-29 victory at New Orleans… Denver's Selvin Young ran for 109 yards and Nate Webster returned a fumble 17 yards for a touchdown, leading the Broncos to a 27-11 win over Kansas City…Leonard Pope and Larry Fitzgerald each caught two touchdown passes in Arizona's 31-21 win over the Lions…The NFL mourned the passing of Dick Nolan, the former head coach of the 49ers and Saints—and father of current San Francisco head coach Mike Nolan—who died at age 75.

WEEK 10
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Ben Roethlisberger (QB, Steelers)
Completed 23 of 34 passes for 278 yards with two TDs and also rushed for a touchdown in win vs. Cleveland.

DEFENSE
Antonio Cromartie (CB, Chargers)
Had three first-half interceptions to help San Diego build a 23-0 lead in victory over Indianapolis.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Darren Sproles (KR-PR, Chargers)
Became ninth player in NFL history to return both a kickoff and a punt for a TD in same game in win over Colts.

OFFENSE
Marc Bulger (QB, Rams)
Completed 27 of 33 passes for 302 yards and 2 TDs, posting a 125.0 passer rating, in win at New Orleans.

DEFENSE
Karlos Dansby (LB, Cardinals)
Had four tackles, two interceptions, and a forced fumble while heading a defensive effort that limited Detroit to minus-18 yards rushing.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Morten Andersen (K, Falcons)
With a pair of FGs (36, 47 yards) and a PAT in win over Panthers, became first NFL player to score 2,500 points.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Marshawn Lynch (RB, Bills)
Rushed for 61 yards and scored a touchdown and game-tying two-point conversion in victory at Miami.

"When I get close to that end zone, I'm trying to get in there. The will to win got me in."
~Ben Roethlisberger, on his 30-yard touchdown run in the Steelers' come-from-behind win over Cleveland.

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{ WEEK 11 } OVERTIMES OFFER OPPOSITE OUTCOMES

Sunday, Nov. 18
N.Y. Giants 16.....@ Detroit 10
@ Minnesota 29.....Oakland 22
Tampa Bay 31.....@ Atlanta 7
@ Green Bay 31.....Carolina 17
@ Houston 23.....New Orleans 10
Cleveland 33.....@ Baltimore 30 (OT)
@ Indianapolis 13.....Kansas City 10
Arizona 35.....@ Cincinnati 27
@ Philadelphia 17.....Miami 7
@ Jacksonville 24.....San Diego 17
@ N.Y. Jets 19.....Pittsburgh 16 (OT)
@ Seattle 30.....Chicago 23
@ Dallas 28.....Washington 23
St. Louis 13.....@ San Francisco 9
New England 56.....@ Buffalo 10

Monday, Nov. 19
@ Denver 34.....Tennessee 20

BY CAPTURING AN IMPROBABLE WIN AGAINST THE RAVENS—EARNED AFTER PHIL DAWSON'S LONG FIELD GOAL SENT THE GAME INTO OVERTIME—CLEVELAND SUDDENLY FOUND ITSELF WITHIN ONE GAME OF THE AFC NORTH LEAD.

At first, Dawson's 51-yard attempt was ruled no good. But officials correctly determined that the kick had successfully cleared the cross bar and bounced back onto the field only after striking the goal post's center support.

That field goal knotted the game at 30-30 and gave Cleveland a second life after letting a 13-point fourth-quarter lead slip away. Brodney Pool's 100-yard interception return for a score had put the Browns in front 27-14, but the Ravens rallied and moved ahead on Matt Stover's 47-yard field goal with 26 seconds remaining.

"This team, for whatever reason, thrives on adversity. The tougher the situation, the better we do," said Dawson, who earlier made kicks from 28 and 39 yards.

In overtime, Cleveland took possession first and drove 43 yards to set up Dawson for his game-winning 33-yard field goal. The victory improved the Browns to 6-4 and thrust them back into the AFC North race, a game behind Pittsburgh (7-3).

Rams Reyna/US Presswire

▲ **TEXANS HOLD 'EM. Andre Johnson clings to a 73-yard TD catch for Houston's first points in its win over the Saints.**

▼ **KELLEN CONNECTS. Kellen Clemens reacts after throwing a 56-yard pass to Laveranues Coles during the Jets' 19-16 victory over the Steelers.**

Rich Kane/US Presswire

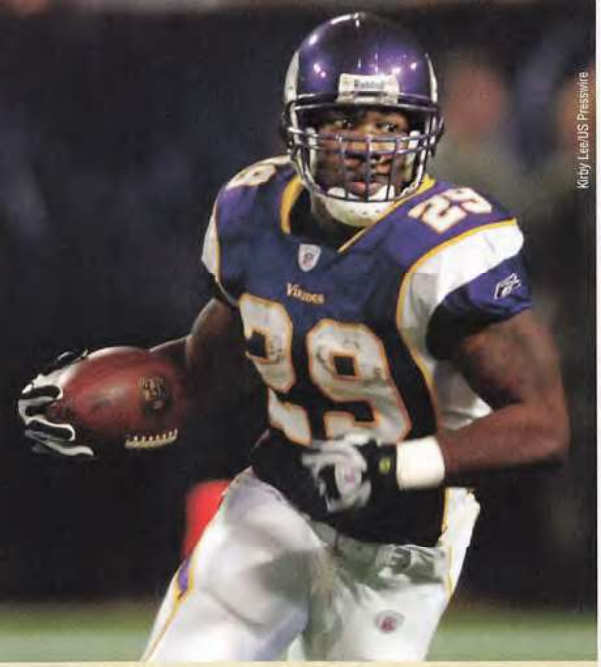
That's because the Steelers were on the wrong side of an overtime verdict against the Jets. New York's Mike Nugent tied the game with a 28-yard field goal in the final minute of regulation, then kicked a 38-yarder in the extra period that lifted the Jets to a 19-16 victory. Sparking the triumph was running back Thomas Jones, who gained 117 yards and became the first player in 35 games to rush for 100 yards against Pittsburgh's defense.

PATRIOTS A PERFECT 10

New England scored touchdowns on its first seven possessions, then added a final TD via a fumble return, as part of a 56-10 romp over the Bills that snapped Buffalo's four-game win streak. The Patriots improved to 10-0 and became the 18th team in NFL history to start a season with at least 10 straight victories. Tom Brady fired five scoring passes—four to Randy Moss—and finished the game 31 of 39 for 373 yards. "From an execution standpoint, there's no telling what we can do," said Moss, who had 10 catches in the win. New England totaled 30 first downs and 510 yards in offense, yet its defense was outstanding as well. Randall Gay intercepted a pass on the Bills' first possession to set up a Patriots touchdown just three minutes into the game. In the fourth quarter, cornerback Ellis Hobbs put the team's final points on the board when he recovered a fumble and brought it back 35 yards for a score.

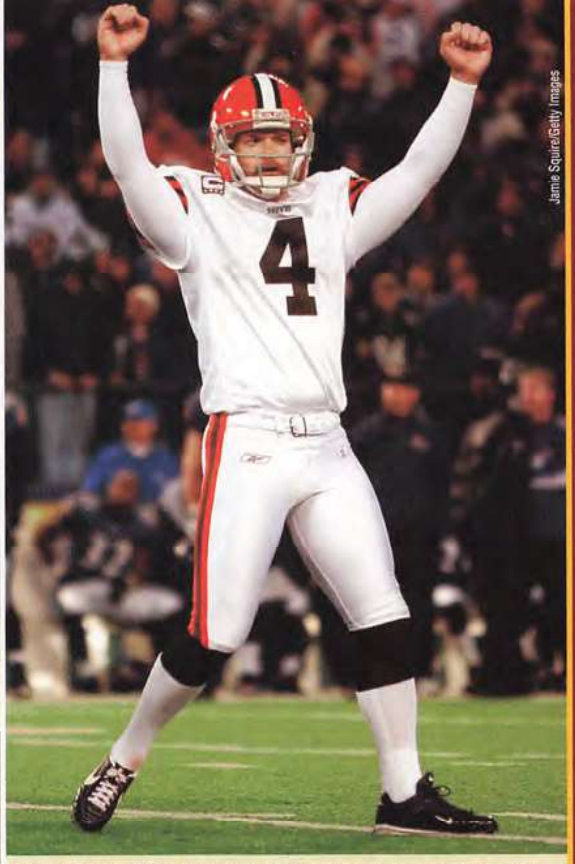
THE RETURNS ARE IN

There were 10 returns for touchdowns in Week 11—four coming on punt returns, three on interceptions, two on fumbles, and one on a kickoff. The game between the Cardinals and Bengals accounted for three of those plays. Antrel Rolle scored Arizona's first and final TDs on long interception returns as the Cardinals raised their record to 5-5 with a 35-27 win. He even brought back a third pickoff for a score, but that one was waved off by a penalty during his return. "I've never had a game like he did, not



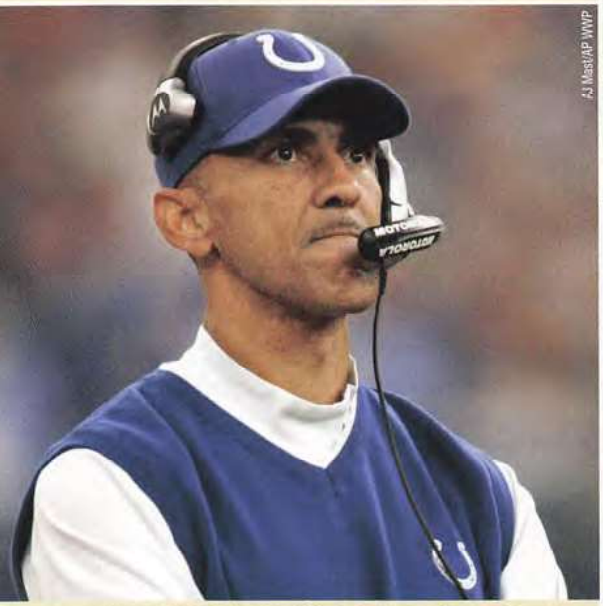
Kirby Lee/US Presswire

▲ TOUCHDOWN TAYLOR. Chester Taylor rushed for 164 yards and scored three times as the Vikings edged Oakland.



Jamie Squire/Getty Images

▲ OVER-PHILLED. Cleveland's Phil Dawson raises his arms after kicking the game-winning FG in overtime against the Ravens.



AJ Mast/AP WWP

▲ ON THE INSIDE TRACK. With their 13-10 win over Kansas City, Tony Dungy's Colts stayed atop a tight AFC South.

Leon Halip/US Presswire

▲ LION HUNTER. Michael Strahan totaled six tackles and three sacks in the Giants' key conference victory at Detroit.

even in high school," said teammate Eric Green. Several division leaders also benefited from return touchdowns. Tramon Williams brought back a punt 94 yards to open the scoring in the Packers' win over the Panthers that improved the NFC North leaders to 9-1. NFC South frontrunner Tampa Bay scored one of its touchdowns on Ronde Barber's 41-yard fumble return, paving the way for a 31-7 victory over the Falcons, and Denver's Glenn Martinez had an 80-yard punt return for a TD as part of a quick start in a 34-20 decision over the Titans that allowed the Broncos to grab a share of the AFC West lead.

WEEK 11 WALK-THROUGH

Through 11 weeks, two divisions—the AFC South and NFC East—had all of its teams owning at least .500 records. Both division leaders were winners in Week 11: the Colts edged Kansas City, 13-10, on Adam Vinatieri's 24-yard FG in the final seconds, while the Cowboys claimed a 28-23 thriller over the Redskins as Tony Romo went 22 of 32 for 293 yards and four touchdowns…Eli Manning threw for 283 yards and had a 10-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Jacobs in the Giants' 16-10 triumph at Detroit… Philadelphia's Brian Westbrook rushed for 148 yards as the Eagles defeated the Dolphins, 17-7…David Garrard threw two TD passes in Jacksonville's 24-17 win over San Diego…Matt Hasselbeck threw for 337 yards and a pair of touchdowns in Seattle's 30-23 win over the Bears that kept the Seahawks atop the NFC West…With Brett Favre (age 38) starting for the Packers and Vinny Testaverde (age 44) doing the same for the Panthers, the NFL had its oldest starting quarterback matchup in history.

WEEK 11
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Randy Moss (WR, Patriots)
First NFL player in 24 seasons to catch four touchdown passes before halftime and finished with 10 grabs for 128 yards in win over Buffalo.

DEFENSE
Shaun Ellis (DE, Jets)
Five tackles, two sacks, one forced fumble, and a fumble recovery in overtime victory against Pittsburgh.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Glenn Martinez (WR-PR, Broncos)
80-yard punt return for a TD was team's longest return in six seasons and helped key triumph over Titans.

OFFENSE
Terrell Owens (WR, Cowboys)
Eight catches for 173 yards (21.6 avg.) and tied franchise record with four TD receptions—of 4, 31, 46, and 52 yards—in win over Washington.

DEFENSE
Antrel Rolle (CB, Cardinals)
Career-high three interceptions and tied NFL mark by returning two for touchdowns to help defeat Bengals.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Tramon Williams (PR, Packers)
94-yard punt return for a touchdown was one yard shy of team record and sparked Packers' win over Carolina.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Ted Ginn Jr. (WR/KR, Dolphins)
Returned punt 89 yards for team's lone TD and caught four passes for 52 yards in loss to Philadelphia.

"When my number is called and opportunities are there to make plays, I know that's my job."
~Terrell Owens, after catching four touchdown passes in Dallas' win over Washington.

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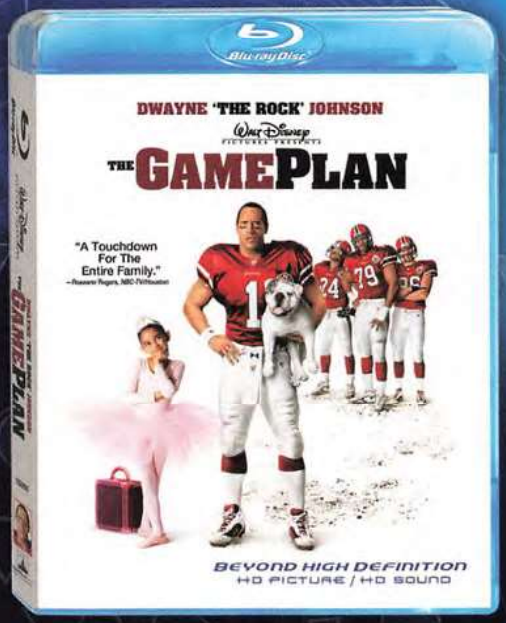

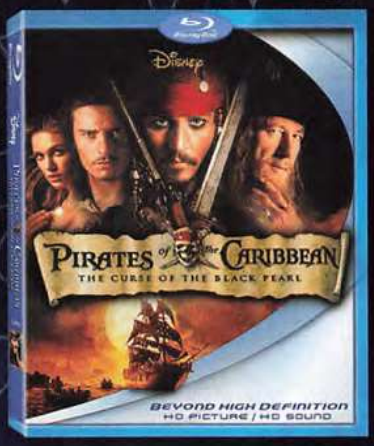

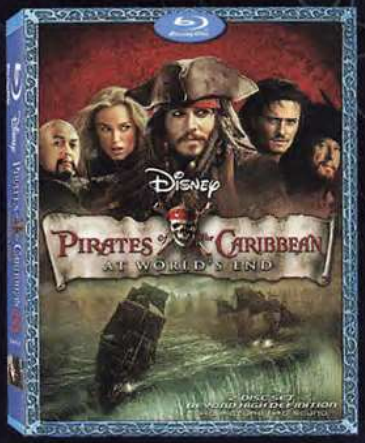

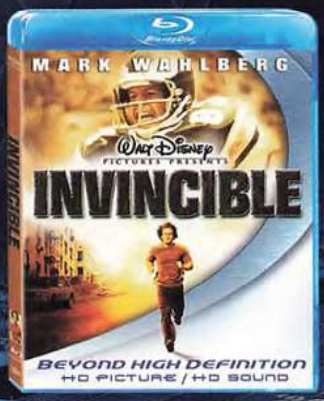

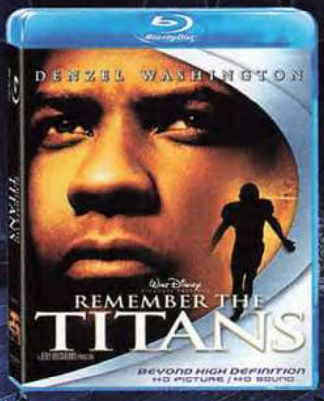

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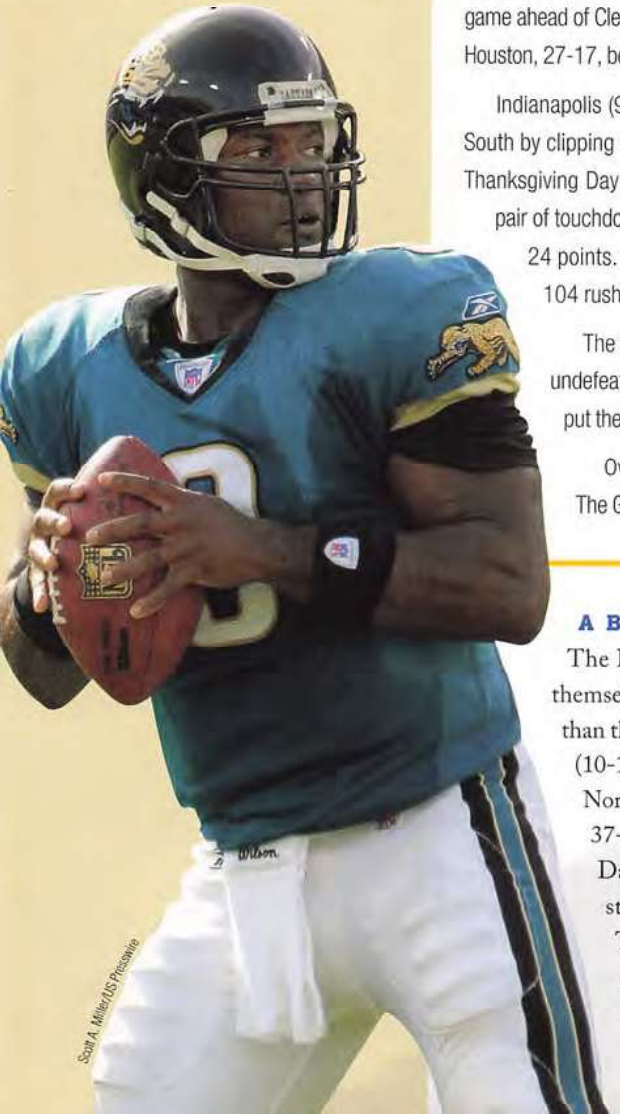
WEEK 12 TIME TO APPLY FOR PLAYOFF OPENINGS

Thursday, Nov. 22
Green Bay 37 .....@ Detroit 26
@ Dallas 34 .....N.Y. Jets 3
Indianapolis 31 .....@ Atlanta 13

Sunday, Nov. 25
New Orleans 31 .....@ Carolina 6
@ Cincinnati 35 .....Tennessee 6
@ Cleveland 27 .....Houston 17
@ Jacksonville 36 .....Buffalo 14
Oakland 20 .....@ Kansas City 17
Minnesota 41 .....@ N.Y. Giants 17
Seattle 24 .....@ St. Louis 19
@ Tampa Bay 19 .....Washington 13
San Francisco 37...@ Arizona 31 (OT)
@ Chicago 37 .....Denver 34 (OT)
@ San Diego 32 .....Baltimore 14
@ New England 31 ....Philadelphia 28

Monday, Nov. 26
@ Pittsburgh 3 .....Miami 0


Scott A. Miller/AP Photowire

▼ **GO, GO GARRARD. David Garrard threw for 296 yards and a TD in leading Jacksonville to its eighth victory of the season.**

ONE TEAM CLINCHED. ONLY ONE HAD BEEN ELIMINATED. AND THE REST OF THE NFL? IT WAS LOCKED IN A PLAYOFF HUNT COMING INTO FOCUS WITH THREE TIGHT DIVISION BATTLES IN THE AFC AND A STUFFED NFC WILD CARD FIELD.

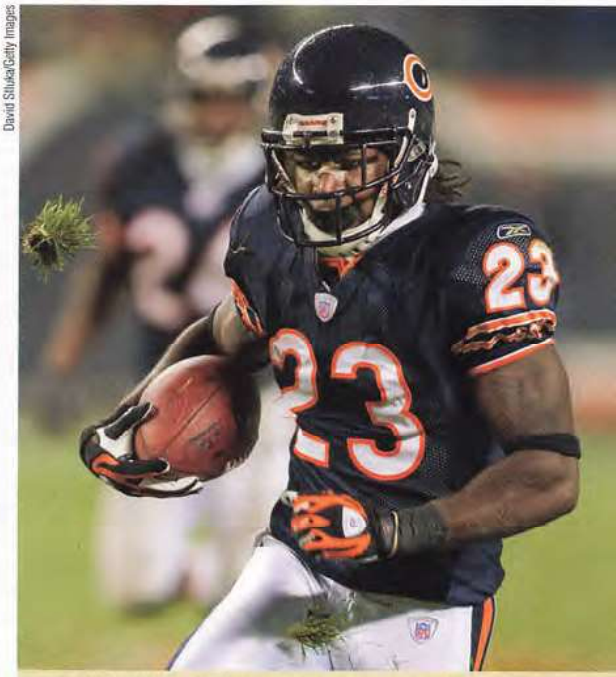
San Diego seized sole possession of the AFC West lead by beating Baltimore, 32-14. Philip Rivers threw for 249 yards and three touchdowns in the win, while LaDainian Tomlinson became the latest NFL player to surpass 10,000 career rushing yards.

The Chargers (6-5) moved in front for good on a 35-yard TD catch by Antonio Gates in the second quarter. Gates later added a 25-yard scoring grab that extended the lead to 29-7.

"We're coming together. We're ready to rock," said Chargers center Nick Hardwick.

Jeff Reed's 24-yard field goal with 17 seconds to play were the only points as Pittsburgh edged Miami, 3-0, in a rain-soaked Monday night affair, keeping the Steelers (8-3) a game ahead of Cleveland in the AFC North. The Browns beat Houston, 27-17, behind a pair of Derek Anderson TD throws.

Indianapolis (9-2) maintained its slim lead in the AFC South by clipping the Falcons, 31-13, to cap the league's Thanksgiving Day tripleheader. Peyton Manning tossed a pair of touchdowns as the Colts scored the game's final 24 points. But the Jaguars (8-3) remained hot on their trail by pounding the Bills, 36-14, behind Fred Taylor's 104 rushing yards and touchdown. Those results prepared the teams for their Week 13 clash in Indianapolis.


David Stluka/Getty Images

▲ **TEARING UP THE TURF. Devin Hester brought back both a punt and a kickoff for touchdowns in Chicago's OT win.**

The conference's other division leader, New England, clinched the AFC East and kept alive its hopes for an undefeated season by taking the measure of the Eagles, 31-28. Laurence Maroney's 4-yard run with 7:20 to play put the Patriots in front, and Asante Samuel sealed the outcome with his end zone interception four minutes later.

Over in the NFC, eight teams could be found bunched within two games of each other in the wild card race. The Giants (7-4) and Lions (6-5) led the way for the two available berths, but were followed by six teams at 5-6.

A BIT OF BREATHING ROOM

The NFC's four division leaders found themselves in more comfortable positions than their AFC counterparts. The Packers (10-1) took a big step toward their fourth North division crown in six years with a 37-26 win at Detroit on Thanksgiving Day. Brett Favre strung together 20 straight completions and threw two TDs to Greg Jennings as Green Bay pushed out to a four-game cushion over the Lions. Dallas stood at 10-1 for the first time in franchise history and took a three-game lead in the East, thanks to a 34-3 triumph over the Jets. South-leading Tampa Bay (7-4) forced six turnovers, among them Ronde Barber's 32nd career interception, in a 19-13 win over Washington. "This is our time of the year," said Brian Kelly, who made a last-minute pickoff to preserve the victory and keep the Bucs two games ahead of the Saints. Seattle (7-4) stretched its West division lead to two games by erupting for 17 straight points to overtake the Rams, 24-19. Leonard Weaver's 5-yard touchdown run midway through the fourth quarter capped the rally.

Elsa/Getty Images

▲ THE RUN CONTINUES. Asante Samuel returns a first-quarter interception for a TD as the Patriots stayed perfect in 2007.

Scott Audette/AP-WWP

▲ GETTING A GRIP. Greg White (#91) and Sammy Davis (#22) tackle Washington's Chris Cooley during Tampa Bay's win.

Frank Victores/US Presswire

▲ GLAD FOR CHAD. Bengals coach Marvin Lewis congratulates Chad Johnson on the first of his three TD grabs vs. Tennessee.

Mark Rebilas/US Presswire

▲ GORE FOR MORE. The 49ers' Frank Gore breaks free for part of his 116 rushing yards in his team's victory over Arizona.

WEEK 12 TALES

Chicago staged the weekend's most impressive rally, scoring 14 points in the final 5:14 of regulation and then beating Denver on Robbie Gould's 39-yard field goal in overtime. The Broncos owned a 34-20 lead after Jay Cutler hit Tony Scheffler on a 14-yard TD pass, but Chicago edged closer when Charles Tillman blocked a punt that set up Adrian Peterson's 4-yard scoring run, then tied the game on Bernard Berrian's twisting 3-yard touchdown catch. The Bears took possession to start overtime and quickly marched 55 yards to set up Gould's kick. It marked the fifth time on the season that the Broncos had a game decided on the final play...Darren Sharper, Dwight Smith, and Chad Greenway all returned interceptions for touchdowns as part of Minnesota's 41-17 road victory against the Giants...Tully Banta-Cain recovered a fumble in the end zone for a TD, lifting the 49ers to a 37-31 overtime win against the Cardinals and spoiling Kurt Warner's 484-yard, two-touchdown passing day. Arizona's Neil Rackers had sent the game into overtime with a 19-yard field goal on the final play of regulation...Drew Brees fired three touchdowns as part of his 260-yard day in the Saints' 31-6 victory over the Panthers...Justin Fargas' 14-yard scoring run lifted the Raiders over the Chiefs, 20-17, marking their first win in the series since 2002. Fargas finished with 139 yards ...Warrick Dunn topped 10,000 career rushing yards during Atlanta's loss to the Colts.

WEEK 12
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Chad Johnson (WR, Bengals)
Had a career-high 12 receptions and tied a franchise mark with three touchdown catches (10, 2, and 3 yards) in triumph over Titans.

DEFENSE
Asante Samuel (CB, Patriots)
Two interceptions–one he returned 40 yards for a TD and another that ended a late scoring threat–along with three tackles in win over Eagles.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Josh Scobee (K, Jaguars)
Scored 18 points on five field goals (46, 33, 22, 23, and 20 yards) and three PATs to help beat Buffalo.

OFFENSE
Frank Gore (RB, 49ers)
Rushed for 116 yards and a pair of touchdowns (11 and 35 yards) and added 11 receptions for 98 yards in overtime win vs. Arizona.

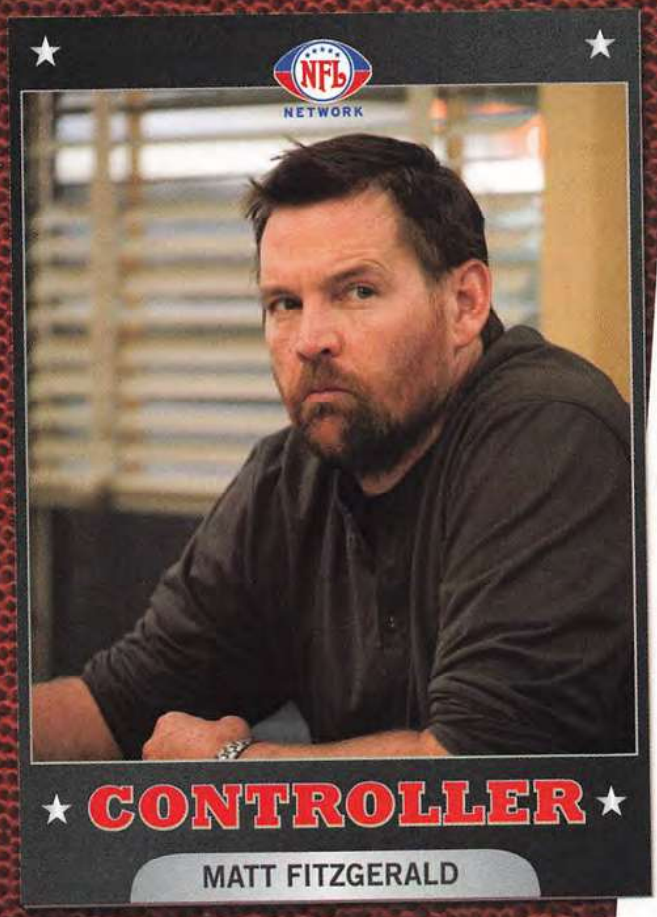
DEFENSE
Dwight Smith (S, Vikings)
Had two interceptions, one he brought back 93 yards for a TD, along with four tackles and three passes defensed in victory over Giants.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester (PR-KR, Bears)
Scored on a 75-yard punt return and an 88-yard kickoff return in third quarter to help defeat Denver.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Patrick Willis (LB, 49ers)
Made 18 tackles, with a game-saving stop in overtime, and also credited with a half-sack in win over Arizona.

"We kind of control our own destiny. I've been waiting a long time to say that."

–Cleveland LB Andra Davis, after a win over Houston improved the Browns to 7-4.



MATT FITZGERALD - PATRIOTS FAN

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Fitzgerald tells it like it is, and for him it's Pats all the way. During the season he watches NFL Network, where experts analyze critical matchups every week on Playbook, so Matt's got the insights to show up any opposing teams' fans. And Matt knows that starting the day after the Super Bowl, NFL Network is the place to follow the Pats all the way 'til Kickoff.

COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	BD	GW	SH	CG	ST
03	PATRIOTS	24	45	04	01	01
04	PATRIOTS	18	38	05	01	01
05	PATRIOTS	32	52	05	02	02
06	PATRIOTS	44	58	07	01	02
07	PATRIOTS	38	54	06	02	02
FAN CAREER		156	247	27	07	08

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BD - BATTERIES DRAINED, GW - GAMES WATCHED, SH - SODA HATS,
CG - COUCHES GROOVED, ST - SORE THUMBS

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NFL NETWORK

WEEK 13 BIG GAMES ATTRACT HUGE NUMBERS

Thursday, Nov. 29
@ Dallas 37 ..... Green Bay 27

Sunday, Dec. 2
@ Carolina 31 ..... San Francisco 14
@ Indianapolis 28 ..... Jacksonville 25
San Diego 24 ..... @ Kansas City 10
N.Y. Jets 40 ..... @ Miami 13
@ Minnesota 42 ..... Detroit 10
Seattle 28 ..... @ Philadelphia 24
@ St. Louis 28 ..... Atlanta 16
@ Tennessee 28 ..... Houston 20
Buffalo 17 ..... @ Washington 16
@ Arizona 27 ..... Cleveland 21
@ Oakland 34 ..... Denver 20
N.Y. Giants 21 ..... @ Chicago 16
Tampa Bay 27 ..... @ New Orleans 23
@ Pittsburgh 24 ..... Cincinnati 10

Monday, Dec. 3
New England 27 ..... @ Baltimore 24

▼ **MAKING A RUN. Vince Young eyes the open field as he picks up yardage during the Titans' important 28-20 triumph over Houston.**

Charles Smith/US Presswire

A PAIR OF CONTESTS FEATURING TEAMS WITH THE NFL'S BEST RECORDS DREW RECORD TELEVISION AUDIENCES IN WEEK 13. FANS TUNING IN SAW THE PATRIOTS REMAIN UNDEFEATED AND WATCHED DALLAS CLIP GREEN BAY IN AN NFC SHOWDOWN.

An average of 17.5 million viewers saw New England rally past the Ravens on *Monday Night Football*, making it the most-watched program in the history of cable TV. The audience peaked at nearly 24 million as the Patriots drove for the winning score in the game's final minutes.

"On the road, in a [loud] environment against a team that has won a lot of games in the last few years," said Patriots QB Tom Brady. "It was tough."

After converting a pair of fourth-down plays, Brady found Jabar Gaffney open in the left corner of the end zone for a touchdown and a 27-24 decision that allowed New England to become just the sixth team in NFL history to start a season with at least 12 straight wins.

Joe Robbins/Getty Images

▲ **REIGN MEN. Coach Mike Holmgren congratulates Lofa Tatupu after his three interceptions grounded the Eagles.**

When Dallas hosted Green Bay, it marked the first time since 1990—and just the eighth time in league annals—that teams with records of 10-1 or better were meeting. An NFL Network audience of better than 10 million fans watched the Cowboys score on each of their first five possessions en route to a 37-27 win that locked up a playoff spot.

"[This win] says we're a pretty good football team," said quarterback Tony Romo, whose second TD pass to Patrick Crayton helped keep the visitors at bay. "We're going to truck along and hopefully put some more wins together, go into the playoffs with a winning streak, and see what we can do."

Although the Packers lost for the first time since Week 5, they kept a four-game lead in the NFC North and stood two games ahead of Tampa Bay and Seattle in the battle for the conference's No. 2 seed.

STANDINGS

*clinched division title **clinched playoff berth

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England*	12-0-0	469	209
Buffalo	6-6-0	184	274
N.Y. Jets	3-9-0	221	291
Miami	0-12-0	196	317

AFC NORTH	W-L-T	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	9-3-0	296	155
Cleveland	7-5-0	336	338
Baltimore	4-8-0	206	270
Cincinnati	4-8-0	291	316

AFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PF	PA
Indianapolis	10-2-0	337	197
Jacksonville	8-4-0	268	223
Tennessee	7-5-0	232	241
Houston	5-7-0	263	291

AFC WEST	W-L-T	PF	PA
San Diego	7-5-0	285	233
Denver	5-7-0	241	329
Kansas City	4-8-0	172	230
Oakland	4-8-0	234	260

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Dallas**	11-1-0	395	248
N.Y. Giants	8-4-0	274	257
Philadelphia	5-7-0	258	246
Washington	5-7-0	229	257

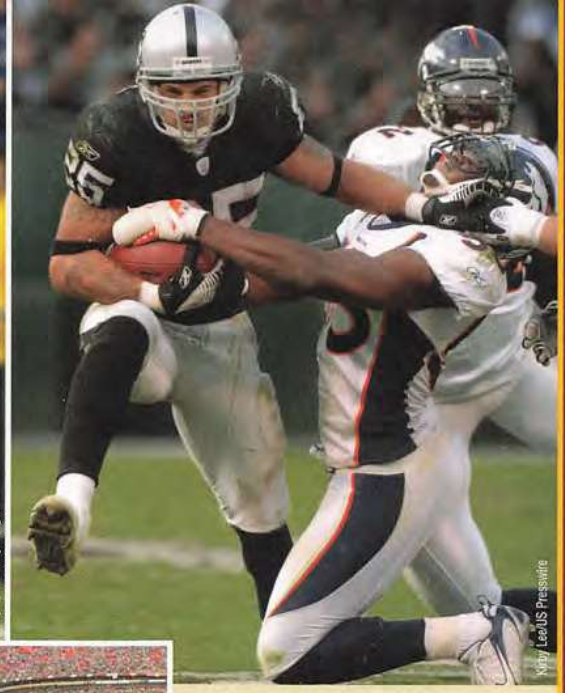
NFC NORTH	W-L-T	PF	PA
Green Bay	10-2-0	323	222
Detroit	6-6-0	267	311
Minnesota	6-6-0	278	237
Chicago	5-7-0	237	272

NFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	8-4-0	241	187
Carolina	5-7-0	204	257
New Orleans	5-7-0	266	279
Atlanta	3-9-0	171	272

NFC WEST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Seattle	8-4-0	273	207
Arizona	6-6-0	281	280
San Francisco	3-9-0	164	285
St. Louis	3-9-0	196	297

Andy Lyons/Getty Images

▲ TAKING CONTROL. Reggie Wayne pulls in a TD catch during the Colts' 28-25 win over AFC South rival Jacksonville.



Kirby Lee/US Presswire

▲ CONQUERING RAIDER. Justin Fargas pushes away a Broncos defender as part of his 146-yard day for Oakland.

Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP WWP

▲ IN THEIR THOUGHTS. Redskins fans remember slain safety Sean Taylor.

CLOSE...AND CLOSER

The Colts captured a 28-25 win over Jacksonville and took a big step toward their fifth straight AFC South title. Although Indy never trailed—Peyton Manning threw TDs to Dwight Clark and Reggie Wayne for a quick 14-0 lead—the Jaguars never let the hosts get comfortable, either. With 2:47 to play, David Garrard (24 of 29, 257 yards) pulled the Jags within three with a scoring strike to Dennis Northcutt, but the Colts were able to run out the clock as they grabbed a two-game division lead. During the contest, Manning joined Dan Marino as the only quarterbacks to have 20 touchdown passes in each of their first 10 NFL seasons. Tampa Bay scored late to pull out a 27-23 win over New Orleans and move three games ahead in the NFC South.

Scott Rovak/US Presswire

▲ RAM(S) TOUGH. Steven Jackson is tackled by Atlanta's John Abraham after a big run in St. Louis' 28-16 victory.

Jovan Haye recovered a fumble at the Saints 37-yard line, setting up Luke McCown's 4-yard TD pass to Jerramy Stevens with 14 seconds remaining. "All I know is that we never quit," said McCown, who finished with 313 passing yards. "All the time, coach [Jon Gruden] told me it wasn't over, and you saw out there why you have to have faith." Seattle's Lofa Tatupu picked off three passes, the last one at the goal line with under a minute to play, allowing the NFC West-leading Seahawks to escape Philadelphia with a 28-24 victory. After Brian Westbrook had given the Eagles a third-quarter lead on his 29-yard TD run, Maurice Morris answered right back with a 45-yard jaunt for the winning points.

THOUGHTS ON 13

Ben Roethlisberger threw a pair of touchdowns to Hines Ward and ran for a score himself as the Steelers defeated Cincinnati, 24-10...LaDainian Tomlinson had TD runs of 31 and 28 yards in the second half to help the Chargers firm up their AFC West lead with a 24-10 decision over Kansas City...Tarvaris Jackson completed 18 of 24 passes and Minnesota scored touchdowns on its first six possessions to handily beat Detroit, 42-10...Vinny Testaverde threw for 169 yards and a pair of TDs in Carolina's 31-14 victory over the 49ers...Rod Hood's 71-yard interception started Arizona's scoring in its 27-21 win over Cleveland...The league mourned the loss of Sean Taylor, the 24-year-old defensive back of the Redskins who died Nov. 27, one day after being shot during an attempted burglary at his Florida home.

WEEK 13
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Peyton Manning (QB, Colts)
Recorded 16th career four-TD game while completing 20 of 29 passes for 288 yards in win over Jacksonville.

DEFENSE
Shawne Merriman (LB, Chargers)
Nine tackles, three sacks—part of the team's eight on the day—and a fumble recovery in victory over Kansas City.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Rian Lindell (K, Bills)
Kicked five field goals, capped by a game-winning 36-yarder with four seconds to go, to edge Washington.

OFFENSE
Tony Romo (QB, Cowboys)
Threw for 309 yards and four TDs, setting a club record for TD passes in a season (33), to help beat Packers.

DEFENSE
Lofa Tatupu (LB, Seahawks)
Had 11 tackles and intercepted three passes, two that set up TDs and one that stopped a late Eagles' threat.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Aundrae Allison (KR-WR, Vikings)
Scored on a 103-yard kickoff return, the longest play in franchise history, to break open the game vs. Lions.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Trent Edwards (QB, Bills)
Threw for 257 yards and directed five scoring drives in win at Washington.

"Everybody's coming out and giving us their best, so we've just got to be prepared to come out and give them ours."
~Jabar Gaffney, whose late TD lifted the Patriots over Baltimore.

{WEEK 14} SURGING SEATTLE SECURES THE WEST

Thursday, Dec. 6
@ Washington 24 .....Chicago 16

Sunday, Dec. 9
@ Buffalo 38.....Miami 17
@ Cincinnati 19.....St. Louis 10
Dallas 28 .....@ Detroit 27
@ Green Bay 38 .....Oakland 7
@ Houston 28 .....Tampa Bay 14
@ Jacksonville 37 .....Carolina 6
N.Y. Giants 16 .....@ Philadelphia 13
San Diego 23....@ Tennessee 17 (OT)
Minnesota 27 .....@ San Francisco 7
@ Seattle 42 .....Arizona 21
@ Denver 41.....Kansas City 7
@ New England 34.....Pittsburgh 13
Cleveland 24 .....@ N.Y. Jets 18
Indianapolis 44 .....@ Baltimore 20

Monday, Dec. 10
New Orleans 34 .....@ Atlanta 14

BY CAPTURING THEIR FIFTH CONSECUTIVE GAME, THE SEAHAWKS BROUGHT HOME THEIR FOURTH STRAIGHT NFC WEST TITLE, BEATING ARIZONA BEHIND A TURNOVER-HUNGRY DEFENSE AND THE SLICK PASSING OF MATT HASSELBECK.

The Seahawks forced five turnovers, including three interceptions by Marcus Trufant, one that set up a touchdown and the last of which he returned 84 yards for a back-breaking score. Defensive end Patrick Kerney added three sacks, pushing his league-leading total to 13.5.

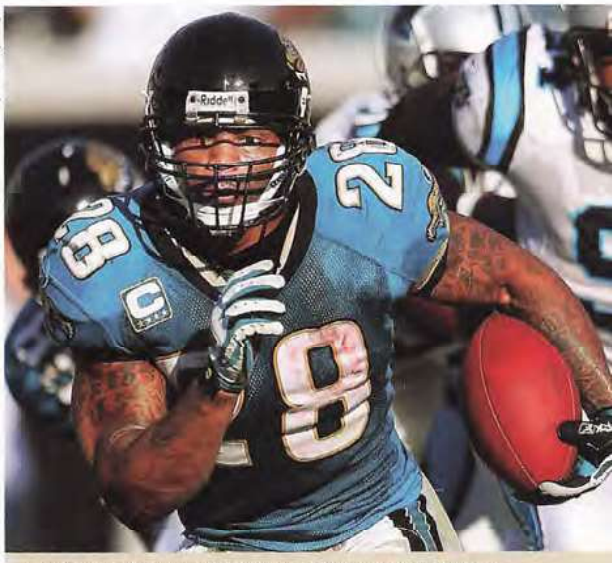
Hasselbeck threw three TD passes before halftime and finished the game completing 22 of 33 attempts for 272 yards. Nate Burleson, Bobby Engram, and Deion Branch were at the receiving end of those early strikes as Seattle built a comfortable 27-7 lead.

Arizona closed within 27-14 in the third quarter, then got the ball right back when Neil Rackers recovered his own onside kick. But Trufant picked off a pass on the next play, setting up a Seattle drive capped by Hasselbeck's fourth TD of the game, a 3-yard throw to Marcus Pollard.

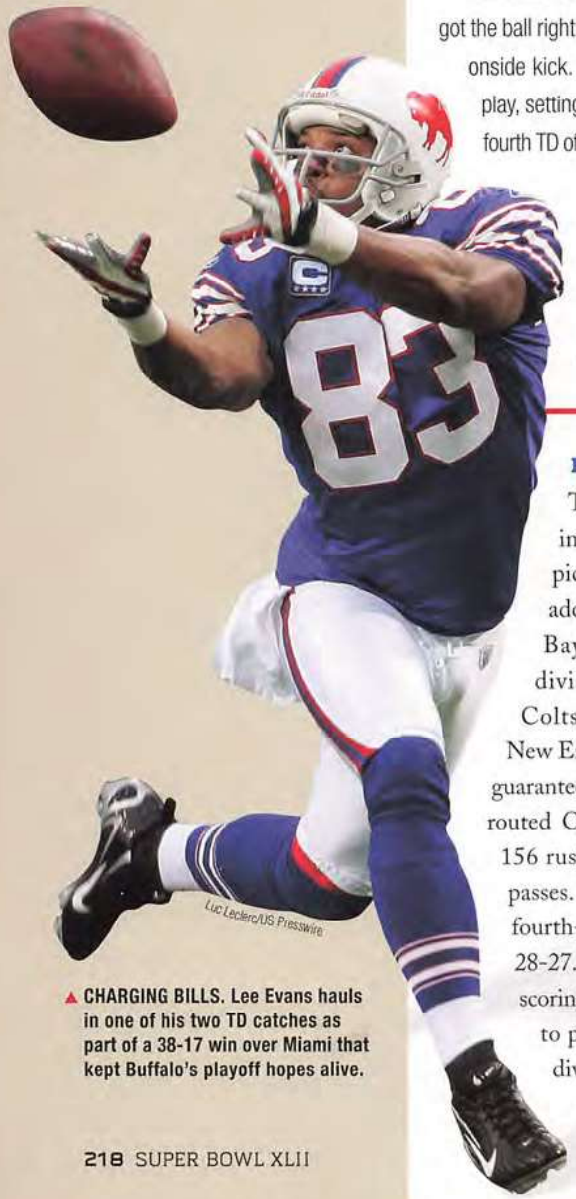
"[Matt] is doing everything I've asked him to do—and probably a little more," said head coach Mike Holmgren, who moved past Chuck Knox to become the all-time winningest coach in Seattle franchise history (84 wins).

At 9-4, the Seahawks matched their win total from 2006, while the Cardinals slipped to 6-7 and dropped a game behind Minnesota in the NFC wild card race.

Paul Spinelli/Getty Images



▲ **FOCUSED FRED. Fred Taylor ran for 132 yards, including an 80-yard touchdown, as the Jaguars beat Carolina.**



Luc Leclerc/US Presswire

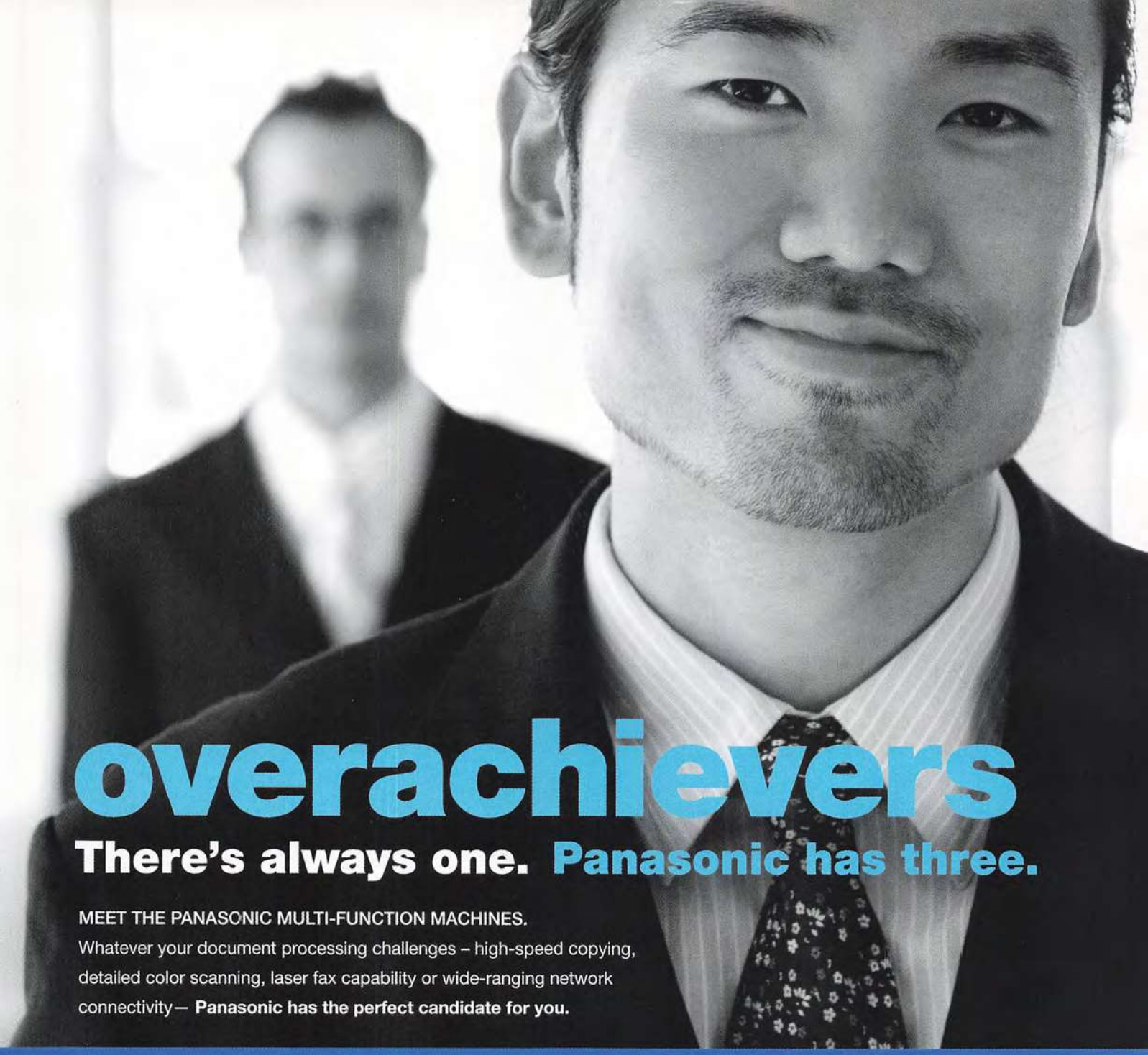
▲ **CHARGING BILLS. Lee Evans hauls in one of his two TD catches as part of a 38-17 win over Miami that kept Buffalo's playoff hopes alive.**

PUNCHING THEIR TICKETS

Though all but nine teams remained in postseason contention, the playoff picture did clear up a bit in Week 14. In addition to Seattle, the NFC saw Green Bay (North) and Dallas (East) clinch division titles. Over in the AFC, the Colts punched their playoff ticket while New England—which remained unbeaten—guaranteed itself a first-round bye. The Packers routed Oakland, 38-7, behind Ryan Grant's 156 rushing yards and two Brett Favre TD passes. Dallas needed to rally with a pair of fourth-quarter touchdowns to edge Detroit, 28-27. Tony Romo fired the winning 16-yard scoring pass to Jason Witten with 18 seconds to play, earning the Cowboys their first division crown since 1998. Indianapolis raced out to a 30-point halftime lead and coasted to a 44-20 win at Baltimore, maintaining its two-game edge in the AFC South and securing at least a wild card berth. In that game, QB Peyton Manning became the fifth player in league history to throw 300 career touchdown passes. "There's not a day that's gone by that I've not been appreciative of the protection I've had and just some outstanding targets, guys who've caught all these passes," said Manning. For the Patriots, Tom Brady lobbed four TDs, giving him 45 on the year and getting him within four of Manning's single-season record, in a 34-13 victory over Pittsburgh.

MINNESOTA MAKING A RUN

The Vikings won their fourth straight game and took the lead in the battle for the NFC's final wild card slot, beating San Francisco, 27-7. Minnesota jumped on top quickly—defensive tackle Kevin Williams returned an interception 18 yards for a



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Kirby Lee/US Presswire

▲ WILL SEES THE WAY. Will Blackmon outruns the Raiders on his way to a 57-yard punt return for a TD in Green Bay's win.

Leon Halip/US Presswire

▲ A TIGHT ENDING. Jason Witten caught 15 passes, including the decisive TD with 18 seconds to play, as Dallas edged Detroit.

Matthew Stockman/Getty Images

▲ FAST-RISING RIVERS. Philip Rivers engineered a pair of late scoring drives that helped San Diego overcome the Titans.

Robert E. Klein/AP WWP

▲ HERE'S THE PLAN. Head coach Bill Belichick speaks with Adalius Thomas (No. 96) and others during the Patriots' win.

touchdown on the first play from scrimmage. By the time running back Chester Taylor darted 84 yards for a second-quarter TD, the Vikings' lead stood at 27-0. "I think if you told our guys a month ago that they were going to be the hunted instead of going hunting, they probably would have asked you, 'Well, how's that going to happen?'" joked head coach Brad Childress. Tarvaris Jackson completed 16 of 25 passes, including a 19-yard TD throw to Robert Ferguson, while Minnesota's defense forced five turnovers and kept the 49ers off the board until the final quarter.

WEEK 14 FODDER

AFC West frontrunner San Diego surged back from a 14-point deficit to top Tennessee, 23-17, in overtime. Philip Rivers threw fourth-quarter touchdowns to LaDainian Tomlinson and Antonio Gates, before Tomlinson raced 16 yards for the winning score midway through the extra session…The Giants, atop the NFC wild card race, edged the Eagles, 16-13. Plaxico Burress' third-quarter touchdown catch gave New York the lead, and the visitors held on when David Akers' 57-yard field goal attempt at the end of regulation bounced off the right upright…The Jaguars limited Carolina to 149 total yards and Clint Ingram had a 39-yard interception return for a score in the team's 37-6 win…Jamal Lewis rushed for 118 yards, including a late 31-yard touchdown, and also caught a TD pass in the Browns' 24-18 victory over the Jets…Lee Evans and Robert Royal both caught a pair of Trent Edwards scoring tosses as the Bills took a 38-17 decision from Miami…Jay Cutler fired four TDs and Selvin Young rushed for 156 yards in the Broncos' 41-7 romp over Kansas City…The Texans snapped Tampa Bay's four-game win streak, 28-14, behind three Sage Rosenfels touchdown passes.

WEEK 14
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady (QB, Patriots)
Completed 32 of 46 passes for 399 yards and four touchdowns against Steelers' top-ranked defense.

DEFENSE
Elvis Dumervil (DE, Broncos)
Five tackles, three sacks, and a forced fumble to lead a defense that yielded just 129 yards while beating Chiefs.

SPECIAL TEAMS
André Davis (WR-KR, Texans)
Returned second-half kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown to help spark team's victory over Tampa Bay.

OFFENSE
Todd Collins (QB, Redskins)
Completed 15 of 20 passes for 224 yards and two TDs–for a 144.6 passer rating–in victory over Chicago.

DEFENSE
Marcus Trufant (CB, Seahawks)
Six tackles and three interceptions, one he brought back 84 yards for a score, to help defeat Arizona.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Will Blackmon (PR-CB, Packers)
In win over Oakland, became fourth player in history to return both a punt and a fumble for TDs in same game.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Trent Edwards (QB, Bills)
Fired four TDs as part of a 165-yard passing effort in victory over Miami.

"He can juke you and leave you standing there, or he can run you over. Both are fun to watch."
~Jacksonville center Brad Meester, after teammate Fred Taylor rushed for 132 yards in the Jaguars' win.

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WEEK 15 PATS KEEP BREWING A PERFECT STORM

Thursday, Dec. 13
@ Houston 31 ..... Denver 13

Saturday, Dec. 15
@ San Francisco 20 ..... Cincinnati 13

Sunday, Dec. 16
@ Carolina 13 ..... Seattle 10
@ Cleveland 8 ..... Buffalo 0
Tennessee 26 ..... @ Kansas City 17
@ Miami 22 ..... Baltimore 16 (OT)
@ New England 20 ..... N.Y. Jets 10
@ New Orleans 31 ..... Arizona 24
Jacksonville 29 ..... @ Pittsburgh 22
Green Bay 33 ..... @ St. Louis 14
@ Tampa Bay 37 ..... Atlanta 3
Indianapolis 21 ..... @ Oakland 14
Philadelphia 10 ..... @ Dallas 6
@ San Diego 51 ..... Detroit 14
Washington 22 ..... @ N.Y. Giants 10

Monday, Dec. 17
@ Minnesota 20 ..... Chicago 13

PLAYING THROUGH A DECEMBER NOR'EASTER THAT DELUGED THE REGION WITH SNOW, RAIN, AND HIGH WINDS, THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS INCHED CLOSER TO AN UNDEFEATED REGULAR SEASON BY DISPATCHING THE VISITING JETS, 20-10.

In becoming the first team since the 1972 Dolphins to win their first 14 games, the Patriots sewed up home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs.

Safety Eugene Wilson put New England on the board with his 5-yard interception return of a Kellen Clemens pass barely six minutes into the game. The team's other TD came on Laurence Maroney's 1-yard run in the second quarter, while Stephen Gostkowski added field goals from 26 and 34 yards to complete the scoring.

"When you have elements like this, you want to play great defense and run the ball," said quarterback Tom Brady.

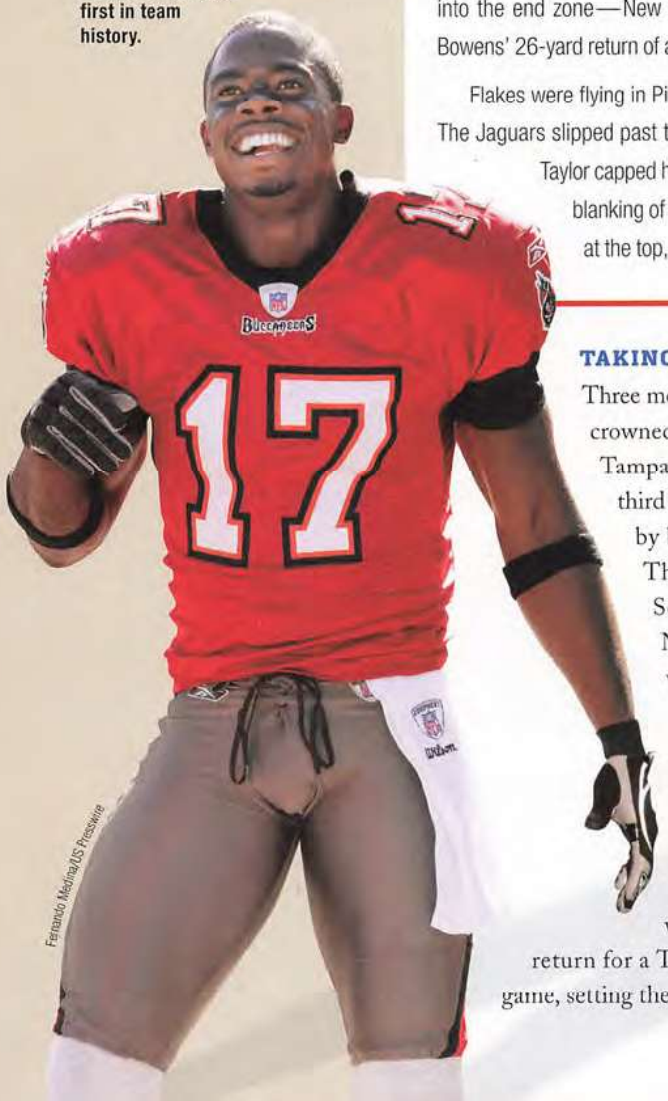
New England did both. Maroney chalked up 104 rushing yards on 26 carries, and the defense didn't allow the Jets into the end zone—New York's lone TD came on David Bowens' 26-yard return of a blocked punt.

Flakes were flying in Pittsburgh and Cleveland as well. The Jaguars slipped past the Steelers, 29-22, when Fred Taylor capped his 147-yard rushing day with a TD scamper that broke a late tie. Combined with the Browns' 8-0 blanking of Buffalo—earned via two Phil Dawson field goals and a safety—the AFC North was deadlocked at the top, with Pittsburgh and Cleveland both possessing 9-5 marks.

Evan Pinkus/Getty Images

▲ **CLINTON'S CROSSING. Clinton Portis rushed for 126 yards as Washington beat the Giants to stay in the playoff hunt.**

▼ **A LOCK ON HISTORY. Tampa Bay's Micheal Spurlock is all smiles after his 97-yard kickoff return for a TD, the first in team history.**

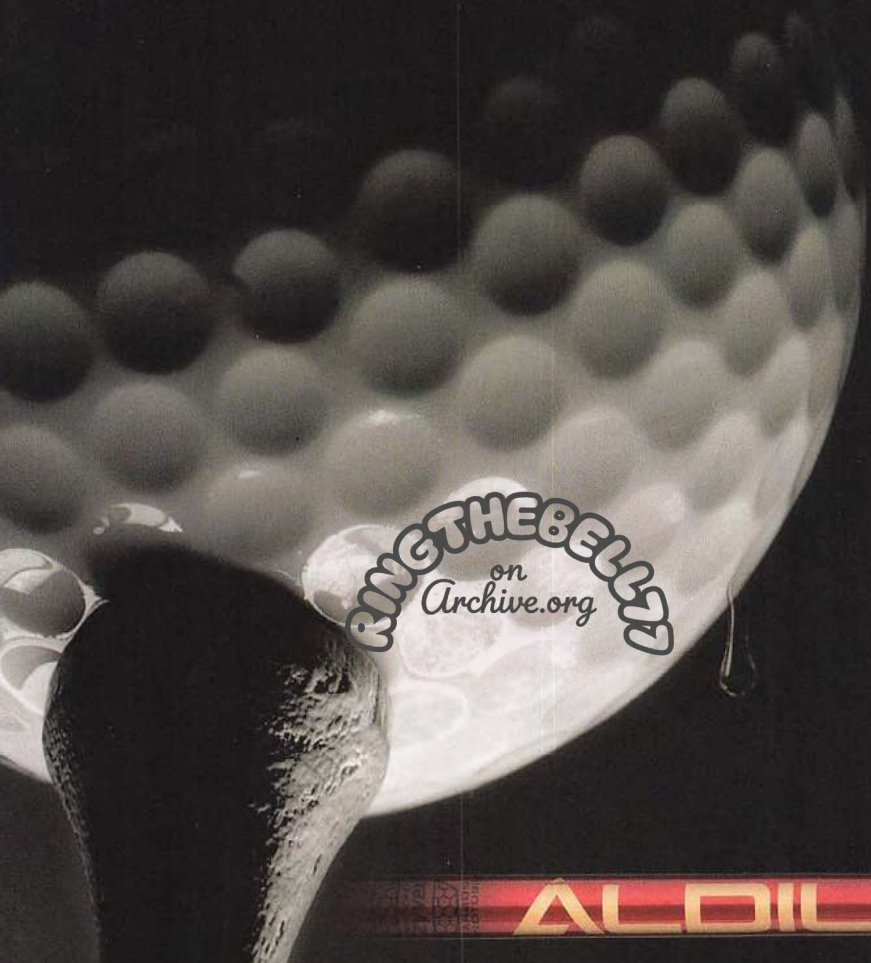


Fernando Medina/US Presswire

TAKING THEIR PLACES

Three more division champions were crowned in Week 15, starting with Tampa Bay, which wrapped up its third NFC South title in six years by beating the Falcons, 37-3. The Colts captured the AFC South and the conference's No. 2 seed with their 21-14 win at Oakland, while the AFC West went to the Chargers for the second straight season, thanks to their 51-14 win over the Lions. Ronde Barber got the Bucs off to a quick start with a 29-yard interception return for a TD on the third play of the game, setting the tone for a stifling defensive effort that allowed Atlanta just five first downs and 133 total yards. "To clinch the division with two weeks to go says a lot about this team," said linebacker Derrick Brooks, a member of Tampa Bay's Super Bowl XXXVII champions. "We still have a couple goals out there [with] how we can use these next two games, in terms of getting our playoff mentality going." Meanwhile, Indianapolis became the first team in NFL history to win 12 or more games in five straight seasons. It wasn't easy, however. After Justin Fargas' 2-yard run gave the Raiders a 14-13 fourth-quarter lead, Peyton Manning countered with a 91-yard drive that ended with a game-winning TD pass to rookie Anthony Gonzalez. In San Diego, Darren Sproles (122 yards) and LaDainian Tomlinson (116) became the first duo in franchise history to rush for 100 yards in the same game—and both also scored a pair of touchdowns—in leading the Chargers to their eighth victory in 10 games.

This is a bad time to be a golf ball



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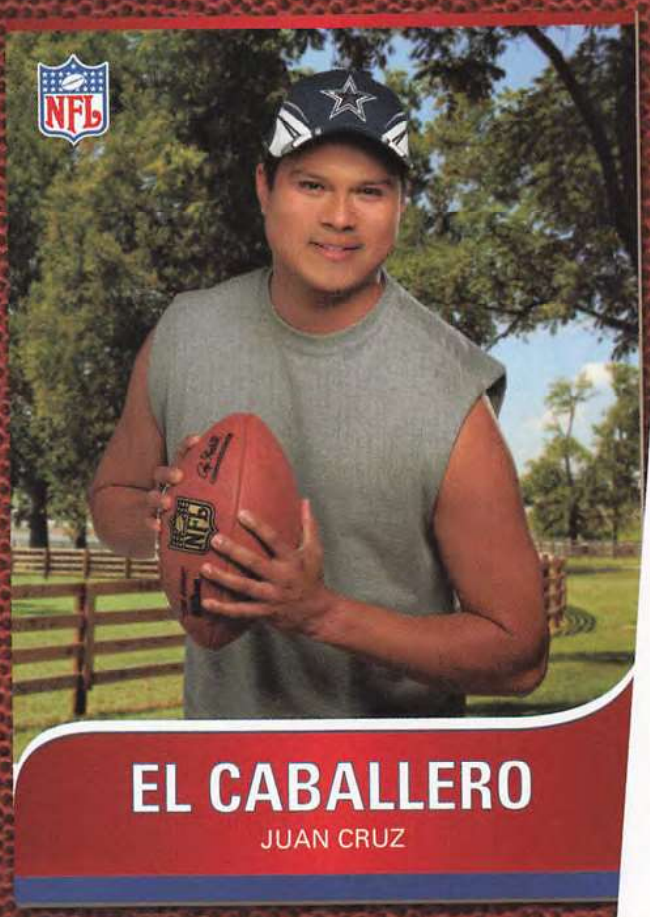

JUAN CRUZ - COWBOYS FAN

EL CABALLERO

Juan is proud of his Cowboys, and NFLatino.com is where he gets his info rápido. News, highlights, and commentary are all up-to-date and in Spanish. With insider information like this, it looks like the Cowboys have a fan for life.

COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	TB	RT	CH	RE	GW
03	COWBOYS	03	00	01	35	15
04	COWBOYS	02	01	04	42	21
05	COWBOYS	06	04	02	39	18
06	COWBOYS	08	03	07	62	33
07	COWBOYS	05	11	01	52	35
FAN CAREER		24	19	15	230	122

5'8" • WT: 182 | POSITION: MARKETING CONSULTANT
DOB: 12-25-72, LOS ANGELES, CA | HOME: DALLAS, TX

TB - TAILGATES BBQ'D, RT - RODEO TROPHIES, CH - COWBOY HATS, RE - RIBS EATEN, GW - GAMES WATCHED

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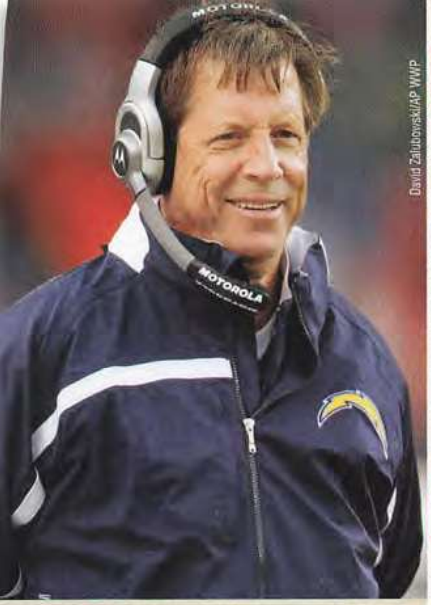
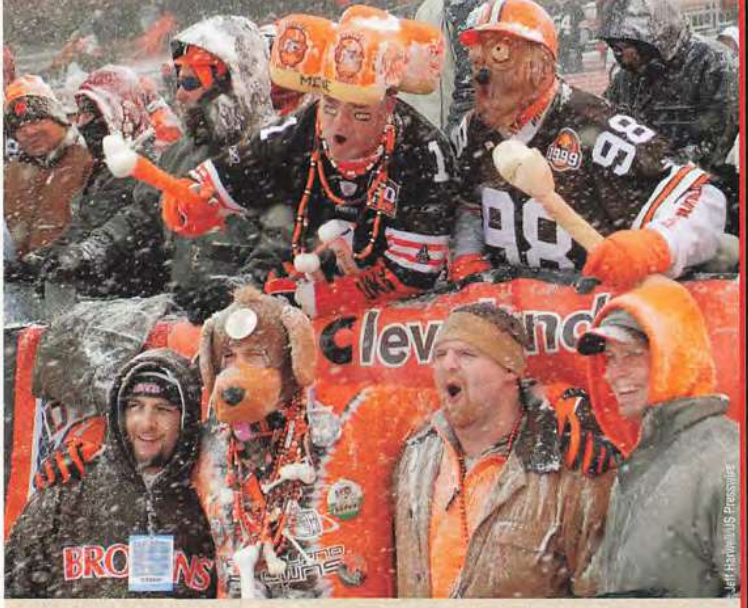
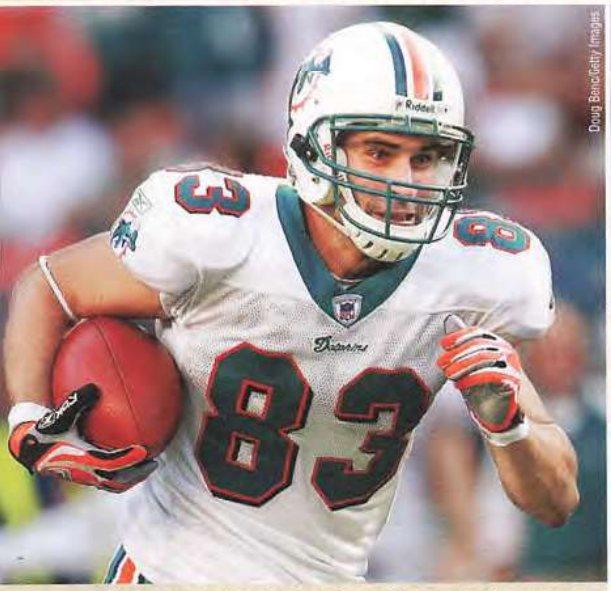

David Zalubowski/AP WWP

▲ TURNER-ROUND. Coach Norv Turner's Chargers wrapped up the AFC West.


Jeff Haynes/US Presswire

▲ SNOW BY THE POUND. Cleveland fans let out a cheer during their team's snowy 8-0 victory over Buffalo that pulled the Browns even with the Steelers in the AFC North.


Doug Benc/Getty Images

▲ FINS FIND THEIR WAY. Greg Camarillo races to the end zone with the game-winning score as Miami won its first game.

Brian Bahr/Getty Images

▲ GOING GREEN. Brian Westbrook gained 81 yards rushing and caught nine passes in Philadelphia's win over the Cowboys.

BRETT ON THE MARK AGAIN

Augmenting his long list of accomplishments, Brett Favre became the NFL's all-time leader in passing yards. He threw for 225 yards (and two touchdowns) in Green Bay's 33-14 win at St. Louis, giving him 61,405 yards for his career and supplanting Hall of Famer Dan Marino from the top spot. "I say every time this happens that I'm honored, but I would much rather win," said Favre, whose first TD throw, a 4-yarder to Donald Lee, broke a 7-7 tie, and second, a 44-yard strike to Greg Jennings, made it a 27-14 game. Favre then got the record when he connected with Donald Driver for a 7-yard gain early in the fourth quarter. "I knew it was coming," said Driver, who caught five passes on the day. "He gave me the little look, and after that I knew I was going to catch it." The win pulled Green Bay (12-2) even with Dallas for the best record in the NFC and clinched a first-round playoff bye.

WEEK 15 SHORT-TAKES

Philadelphia dealt Dallas just its second setback of the year, with Donovan McNabb's 1-yard touchdown pass to Reggie Brown providing the decisive points in the 10-6 win…Adrian Peterson's second scoring run of the game, an 8-yarder early in the fourth quarter, lifted the Vikings to a 20-13 victory over the Bears. Darren Sharper later locked up the win with his end zone interception…A pair of NFC playoff hopefuls—Washington and New Orleans—improved their records to 7-7. Clinton Portis rushed for 126 yards, including a 5-yard touchdown, in the Redskins' 22-10 win over the Giants. The Saints relied on the arm of Drew Brees, who completed 26 of 30 passes for 315 yards in their 31-24 victory over Arizona…Vince Young completed 16 passes, the biggest being a 41-yard touchdown strike to Roydell Williams that gave Tennessee the lead for good, in the Titans' 26-17 triumph at Kansas City.

WEEK 15
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Cleo Lemon (QB, Dolphins)
In leading Miami to first victory of season, completed 23 of 39 passes for 315 yards, capped by 66-yard TD in overtime that beat Baltimore.

DEFENSE
Mario Williams (DE, Texans)
Had seven tackles and 3.5 sacks—his fifth straight game with a sack—to pace team's win over Denver.

SPECIAL TEAMS
T.J. Rushing (KR-DB, Colts)
Returned a punt 90 yards for a TD and averaged 24.3 yards on three kickoff returns in win at Oakland.

OFFENSE
Drew Brees (QB, Saints)
Completed 86.7 percent of his passes (26 of 30) with two TDs and a 132.6 passer rating to help beat Arizona.

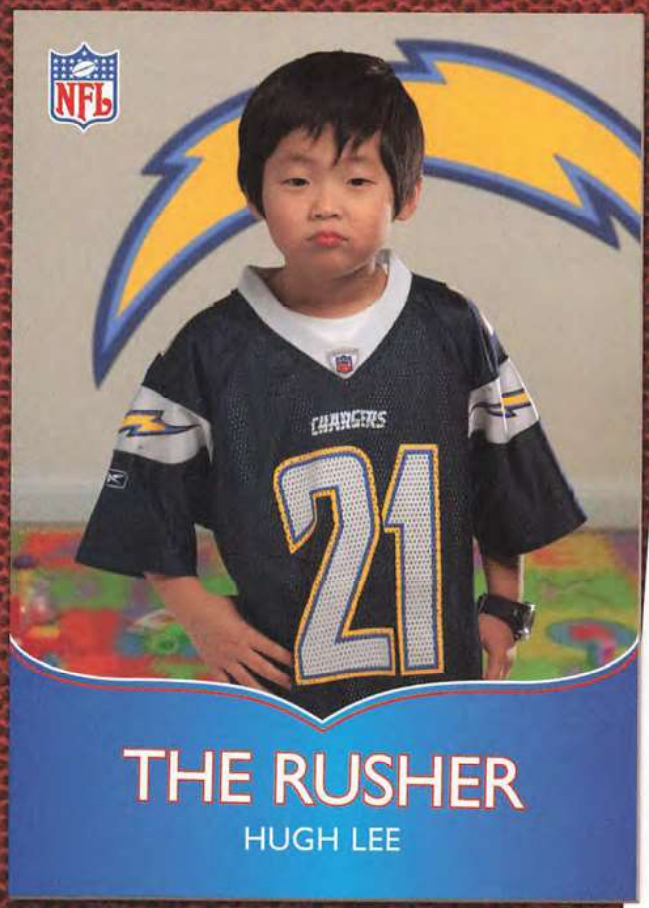
DEFENSE
Lito Sheppard (CB, Eagles)
Had six tackles and a second-quarter interception that set up game's lone TD to spark victory at Dallas.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Micheal Spurlock (KR-WR, Bucs)
Registered first kickoff return for a touchdown in franchise's 32-year history, bringing back a 90-yarder in first quarter of win over Atlanta.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Mason Crosby (K, Packers)
Kicked four field goals, including a 50-yarder, in victory at St. Louis.

"I was happy there weren't any presents in there. I didn't want to squish anyone's presents."

~Eagles WR Reggie Brown, who tumbled into a Salvation Army kettle on the Texas Stadium sidelines after trying to make a catch.



HUGH LEE - CHARGERS FAN

THE RUSHER

Lee loves to tackle high scores, so it was only a matter of time before NFLRUSH.com caught Lee's attention with its games, contests, and full-throttle NFL experience for kids. In the NFLRUSH ZONE, he's created a Chargers avatar that dominates. When he's not online, Lee's quickly becoming a superstar receiver on the field.

COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	HL	A	WPM	SK	HS
05	CHARGERS	02	03	36	00	00
06	CHARGERS	27	07	43	01	19
07	CHARGERS	43	05	52	02	26
FAN CAREER		72	15	130	03	45

4'1" • WT: 56 | POSITION: 2ND GRADER
DOB: 06-10-00, AZURE VISTA, CA | HOME: AZURE VISTA, CA

HL - HOURS LOGGED, A - AVATARS, WPM - WORDS PER MINUTE, SK - SKINNED KNEES, HS - HIGH SCORES

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NFLRUSH.com

{WEEK 16} JAGS AND GIANTS JUMP INTO PLAYOFFS

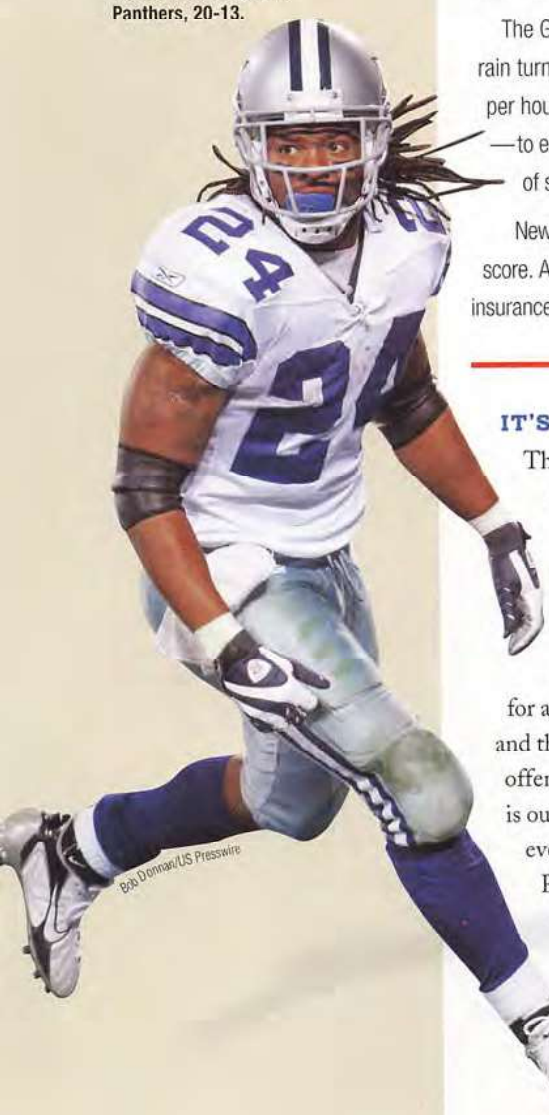
Thursday, Dec. 20
Pittsburgh 41 .....@ St. Louis 24

Saturday, Dec. 22
Dallas 20 .....@ Carolina 13

Sunday, Dec. 23
N.Y. Giants 38 .....@ Buffalo 21
@ Chicago 35 .....Green Bay 7
@ Cincinnati 19 .....Cleveland 14
@ Detroit 25 .....Kansas City 20
@ Indianapolis 38.....Houston 15
@ Jacksonville 49 .....Oakland 11
Philadelphia 38.....@ New Orleans 23
@ Arizona 30.....Atlanta 27 (OT)
@ San Francisco 21 ....Tampa Bay 19
@ New England 28.....Miami 7
@ Seattle 27.....Baltimore 6
@ Tennessee 10.....N.Y. Jets 6
Washington 32.....@ Minnesota 21

Monday, Dec. 24
@ San Diego 23.....Denver 3

▼ **JUST A TRIM. Marion Barber had a TD run that helped the Cowboys edge the Panthers, 20-13.**



Bob Donnan/US Presswire

ONE SETTLED IT EARLY, THE OTHER PULLED AWAY LATE. BUT REGARDLESS OF THE TIMING, BOTH JACKSONVILLE AND THE NEW YORK GIANTS CAPTURED VICTORIES BEHIND TOTAL TEAM EFFORTS THAT ALSO LOCKED UP POSTSEASON BERTHS.

The Jaguars scored on their first offensive play when Fred Taylor sprinted 62 yards for one of the team's four first-half touchdowns. By the time it was all over, Jacksonville had overwhelmed Oakland, 49-11, to reach the playoffs for the second time in three years.

Taylor finished with 111 rushing yards, his fifth straight 100-yard game, while quarterback David Garrard threw for a pair of touchdowns and also ran for a score. The Jaguars' defense picked off three passes and recovered a fumble.

"Not only do we want get back [to the playoffs], we want to get back and win," said defensive end Paul Spicer. "We're not just happy we're in. We want to get in there and take care of business."

Dilip Vishwanat/Getty Images

▲ **DALLAS DERAILS TEXANS. Tight end Dallas Clark makes one of his two TD catches in the Colts' win over Houston.**

The Giants and Bills battled in wild conditions that saw rain turn to snow, and the wind gust as high as 50 miles per hour. Relying on its ground game, New York racked up 291 rushing yards—its highest total in nearly 50 seasons—to earn a 38-21 win. Ahmad Bradshaw ran for 151 yards and Brandon Jacobs picked up 145, highlighted by a pair of second-quarter touchdown jaunts that helped the Giants recover from an early 14-0 deficit.

New York still trailed, 21-17, in the fourth quarter until Kawika Mitchell returned an interception 20 yards for the go-ahead score. After Bradshaw broke free for an 80-yard run that put the Giants in front by 10, Corey Webster tacked on more insurance by bringing back a pickoff 34 yards for a touchdown and sending New York to the playoffs for the third straight year.

IT'S A WRAP (FOR SOME)...

The holiday weekend saw Pittsburgh—a 41-24 winner at St. Louis—clinch the AFC North and Dallas—which clipped Carolina, 20-13—secure the top seed in the NFC. For the Steelers, Ben Roethlisberger threw for 261 yards and three touchdowns, while Najeh Davenport came off the bench for an injured Willie Parker to rush for 123 yards and three scores. "I took it upon myself to put the offense on my back," said Davenport. "[Willie] is our guy; he's our breadwinner. Not having him, everyone has to pick it up a level." A 31-yard Roethlisberger to Nate Washington TD pass put the Steelers ahead for good, and Ike Taylor iced the game by bringing back an interception 51 yards for a touchdown with 3:46 to go. The Cowboys jumped out to a quick lead against the Panthers. Terrell Owens' 10-yard touchdown catch opened the scoring, and Marion Barber followed with a 5-yard scamper that made it 14-0 in the second quarter. Barber finished with 110 yards rushing, while Tony Romo had 257 passing yards as Dallas (13-2) matched the franchise record for wins in a season.

...AND A CHASE (FOR OTHERS)

The final playoff berth in both conferences remained up for grabs. Tennessee positioned itself well in the AFC by beating the Jets, 10-6, behind a Chris Brown TD run and six sacks. "We fight and we live to see another day," said tailback LenDale White, who rushed for 103 yards and crossed the 1,000-yard mark for the season. Brown's 4-yard run and a Rob Bironas PAT gave the Titans a 7-0 second-quarter lead. New York answered with Chad Pennington's

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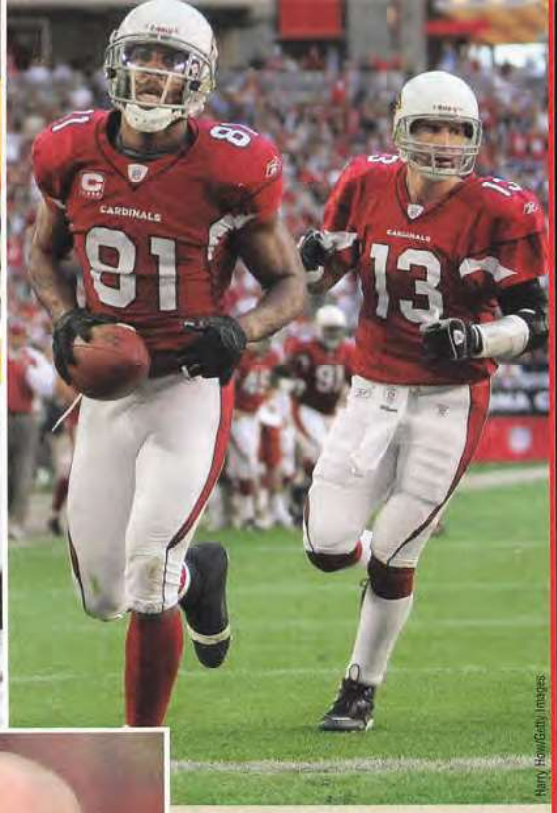
Elsa/Getty Images

▲ NICE GOING, NAJEH. Ben Roethlisberger congratulates Najeh Davenport for scoring a TD during the Steelers' win.



Harry How/Getty Images

▲ CARDS TO THE HOUSE. Arizona's Anquan Boldin heads for the end zone after catching a Kurt Warner (No. 13) pass.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

▲ BIG BRIAN. Brian Urlacher returned an interception 85 yards for a TD.

9-yard scoring strike to Jerricho Cotchery, but Tennessee's Antwan Odom blocked the extra point. Keith Bulluck stopped another Jets threat with an end zone pick-off, while Bironas added a 46-yard field goal for the final margin.

The NFC race swung Washington's way following a 32-21 victory at Minnesota. The Redskins stormed out to a 25-0 lead—thanks to a pair of Todd Collins TD throws, a Clinton Portis scoring pass, a field goal, and a safety. After Minnesota pulled within 11 in the fourth quarter, the Redskins answered back with a drive capped by Portis' 11-yard TD run that put the game out of reach. Cleveland, the Vikings, and New Orleans also remained alive in the playoff hunt.

Jeff Zelevansky/Getty Images

▲ THREE CHEERS. Head coach Tom Coughlin directed the N.Y. Giants to their third straight playoff appearance.

PENULTIMATE PROFILES

New England became the first NFL team in history to win its first 15 regular-season games, beating Miami, 28-7. Tom Brady threw three touchdown passes and Laurence Maroney rushed for 156 yards, a large chunk of that total coming on a 59-yard scoring run in the second quarter…The Bears completed a season sweep of Green Bay with a 35-7 win at Soldier Field. Chicago broke the game open in the third quarter on Kyle Orton's 3-yard TD pass to Desmond Clark and Corey Graham's 7-yard return of a blocked punt for another score…San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson rushed for 107 yards, including a 17-yard scamper for his team's first score, and the Chargers' defense surrendered just 12 first downs and 225 total yards in a 23-3 triumph over Denver…The Colts amassed 458 total yards and 33 first downs in their 38-15 victory over Houston…Arizona's Anquan Boldin set an NFL record by reaching 400 career catches in his 67th game, beating the standard set by Kellen Winslow (72 games). The Cardinals then beat Atlanta, 30-27, when Neil Rackers connected on a 31-yard field goal early in overtime…Shaun Hill's third touchdown pass of the game, a 23-yarder to Frank Gore, accounted for the winning points in San Francisco's 21-19 victory over Tampa Bay…Paris Lenon's 51-yard interception return and T.J. Duckett's 102 rushing yards lifted the Lions to a 25-20 win over Kansas City.

WEEK 16
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Ben Roethlisberger (QB, Steelers)
Completed 16 of 20 passes for 261 yards and three TDs, earning the third perfect passer rating of his career (158.3), in win at St. Louis.

DEFENSE
Kyle Vanden Bosch (DE, Titans)
Keyed stingy defensive effort in win over Jets with team-high 12 tackles, three sacks, and a forced fumble.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Darrell Reid (DT, Colts)
Posted four special teams tackles, three on kickoff coverage and one on a punt return, in victory over Texans.

OFFENSE
Clinton Portis (RB, Redskins)
Totaled 124 yards from scrimmage—76 rushing and 48 receiving—and ran for a touchdown and threw a TD pass in decisive win at Minnesota.

DEFENSE
Kawika Mitchell (LB, Giants)
Had six tackles, two sacks, a forced fumble, and returned an interception 20 yards for TD to help defeat Bills.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Brad Maynard (P, Bears)
Despite difficult conditions, handled all snaps cleanly on punts, FGs, and PATs in home triumph over Packers.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Patrick Willis (LB, 49ers)
Had 20 tackles, two sacks, and one forced fumble in win over Tampa Bay.

"It'll get better as I get older. Give me 20, 25 years, [and] I'll score on that play."

~Bears defensive end Alex Brown, joking about his interception that set up a touchdown in Chicago's win over Green Bay.

WEEK 17 — SEASON'S ENDING IS SIMPLY PERFECT

Saturday, Dec. 29
New England 38 .....@ N.Y. Giants 35

Sunday, Dec. 30
@ Atlanta 44.....Seattle 41
@ Chicago 33.....New Orleans 25
@ Cleveland 20 .....San Francisco 7
@ Green Bay 34 .....Detroit 13
@ Houston 42 .....Jacksonville 28
Cincinnati 38.....@ Miami 25
@ Philadelphia 17.....Buffalo 9
Carolina 31 .....@ Tampa Bay 23
@ Arizona 48 .....St. Louis 19
@ Baltimore 27 .....Pittsburgh 21
@ Denver 22.....Minnesota 19 (OT)
@ N.Y. Jets 13 ....Kansas City 10 (OT)
San Diego 30 .....@ Oakland 17
@ Washington 27 .....Dallas 6
Tennessee 16.....@ Indianapolis 10

Rich Kane/US Presswire

BY RALLYING FROM THE BIGGEST DEFICIT THEY'D SEEN ALL YEAR, THE PATRIOTS BECAME JUST THE FOURTH NFL TEAM IN HISTORY—AND FIRST SINCE THE 1972 DOLPHINS—TO COMPLETE AN UNDEFEATED AND UNTIED REGULAR SEASON.

Trailing the host Giants, 28-16, in the third quarter, New England scored three straight touchdowns to pull out the victory. Fittingly, it was a 65-yard Tom Brady-to-Randy Moss strike that moved the Patriots ahead for good. The throw gave Brady the league record for TD passes in a season (50) and Moss the mark for single-season TD catches (23).

Laurence Maroney ran for a pair of second-half scores, and New England sewed up the game by recovering an onside kick with just over a minute to play after the Giants had pulled within 38-35.

"What I'm most proud of is that we beat a playoff team on the road," said Brady. "We found a way to come back, just like we did in Dallas and Indianapolis. That shows toughness and character."

The Giants were up to the challenge for most of this prime-time showdown. They scored on their opening drive and owned a 14-10 lead after Domenick Hixon returned a kickoff 74 yards for a score. They would later move in front by 12 points early in the second half when Eli Manning found Plaxico Burress open in the end zone on a 19-yard TD pass.

But the Patriots answered the call. Maroney's 6-yard TD run got them close, and after the Brady-to-Moss pass put them in front with11:06 to play, Ellis Hobbs grabbed a sideline interception that set up Maroney's second score.

The Patriots, who also set an NFL record for points scored (589), became the first team since the schedule expanded to 16 games to post a perfect mark. The Dolphins were 14-0 in 1972; the Bears went 13-0 in 1934 and 11-0 in 1942.

David J. Phillip/AP WWP

▲ **DOUBLE TROUBLE. André Davis returned two kickoffs for touchdowns in the Texans' 42-28 win over Jacksonville.**

Chris McGrath/Getty Images

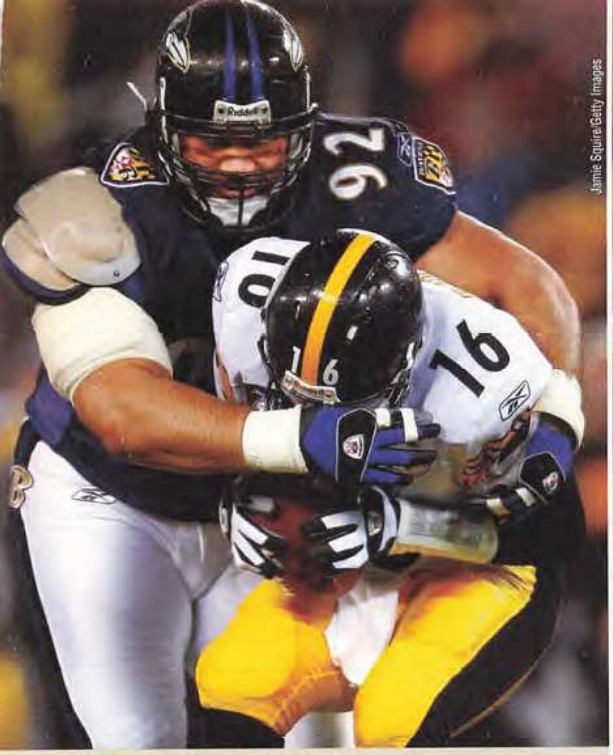
◀ **16-AND-OH SO SWEET. Randy Moss pulls in the go-ahead TD in New England's victory over the Giants that completed an historic regular season.**

STANDINGS

*clinched division title **clinched playoff berth

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England*	16-0-0	589	274
Buffalo	7-9-0	252	354
N.Y. Jets	4-12-0	268	355
Miami	1-15-0	267	437
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Pittsburgh*	10-6-0	393	269
Cleveland	10-6-0	402	382
Cincinnati	7-9-0	380	385
Baltimore	5-11-0	275	384
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Indianapolis*	13-3-0	450	262
Jacksonville**	11-5-0	411	304
Tennessee**	10-6-0	301	297
Houston	8-8-0	379	384
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
San Diego*	11-5-0	412	284
Denver	7-9-0	320	409
Kansas City	4-12-0	226	335
Oakland	4-12-0	283	398

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Dallas*	13-3-0	455	325
N.Y. Giants**	10-6-0	373	351
Washington**	9-7-0	334	310
Philadelphia	8-8-0	336	300
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Green Bay*	13-3-0	435	291
Minnesota	8-8-0	365	311
Chicago	7-9-0	334	348
Detroit	7-9-0	346	444
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Tampa Bay*	9-7-0	334	270
Carolina	7-9-0	267	347
New Orleans	7-9-0	379	388
Atlanta	4-12-0	259	414
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Seattle*	10-6-0	393	291
Arizona	8-8-0	404	399
San Francisco	5-11-0	219	364
St. Louis	3-13-0	263	438



Jamie Squire/Getty Images

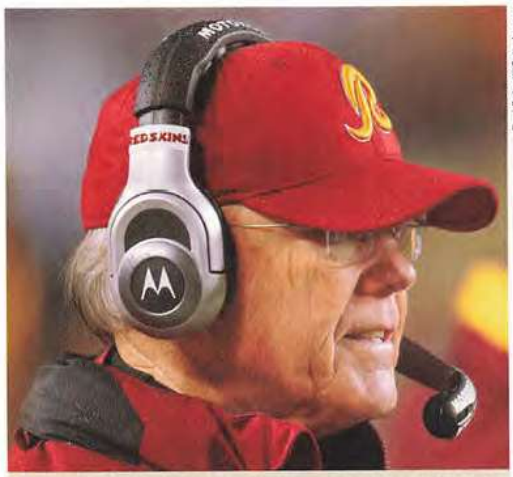
▲ RAVEN WRAP-UP. Haloti Ngata gets his arms around QB Charlie Batch during Baltimore's triumph in Pittsburgh.

Brian Spurlock/US Presswire

▲ TEN-NESSEE TITANS. Kerry Collins' solid second half helped the Titans win their 10th game and clinch a postseason berth.

FULFILLING FINALES

The league's final two playoff spots went to Tennessee and Washington. The Titans edged the Colts, 16-10, to gain the AFC's No. 6 seed, behind QB Kerry Collins and kicker Rob Bironas. Collins, celebrating his 35th birthday, took over for an injured Vince Young early in the second half and completed 10 of 13 passes for 103 yards. He directed three drives that ended with Bironas field goals, including a go-ahead 54-yarder midway through the fourth quarter. "That's why Kerry is where Kerry is," said Tennessee head coach Jeff Fisher. "He's one play away from playing. He's played an awful lot of ball, [and] being a backup in this league is harder than starting." In that game, Indianapolis QB Peyton Manning extended his own NFL record by reaching 4,000 passing yards for the eighth time in his career. The Redskins locked up the NFC's last bid by defeating Dallas, 27-6, for their fourth straight victory as Clinton Portis rushed for 104 yards and scored twice. "To think four weeks ago where we were, and where we are [now], it was a great experience and a great ride," said head coach Joe Gibbs. Also in Week 17, the Chargers secured the No. 3 seed in the AFC with a 30-17 win over the Raiders to head into the postseason on a six-game winning streak. San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson captured the league rushing title (1,474 yards) for the second straight year, gaining 56 yards on 16 carries.



Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

▲ A SECOND CUP OF JOE. Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs led Washington to its second playoff bid in three seasons.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Cleveland finished 10-6, a six-win improvement over 2006, while Houston went 8-8, its best record in franchise history…Green Bay (13-3) set a team record for wins in a season, with QB Brett Favre making his 253rd consecutive start and throwing a pair of TDs in a 34-13 victory over the Lions…Tony Gonzalez became the NFL record-holder for career receptions by a tight end (820), passing Shannon Sharpe in the Chiefs' 13-10 overtime loss to the Jets…Devin Hester had his league record-breaking sixth return TD of the season, bringing back a punt 64 yards in the Bears' 33-25 win over New Orleans. In that same game, Saints QB Drew Brees broke the league mark for completions in a season (442)… During 2007, there were 25 kickoffs returned for touchdowns and 42 combined kickoff/punt returns brought back for scores, both toppling league marks …The NFL set an attendance record for the fifth straight season, averaging 67,738 fans per game. Total attendance climbed to 17,341,012.

WEEK 17
WHO WANTS IT MORE?

PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady (QB, Patriots)
Capped team's undefeated regular season by completing 32 of 42 passes for 356 yards and two touchdowns in come-from-behind win vs Giants.

DEFENSE
Jyles Tucker (LB, Chargers)
Four tackles, three sacks, two forced fumbles, and a fumble recovery for a touchdown in victory at Oakland.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Rob Bironas (K, Titans)
Finished year with league-high 35 FGs, kicking three in win over Colts.

OFFENSE
Chris Redman (QB, Falcons)
By throwing for 251 yards and four touchdowns, led Atlanta to its highest point total since 1998 to beat Seattle.

DEFENSE
Antrel Rolle (CB, Cardinals)
Grabbed two interceptions, one that he brought back 47 yards for a touchdown, in victory over St. Louis.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester (WR-KR-PR, Bears)
Scored on a 64-yard punt return and a 55-yard catch in win over Saints.

DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Brandon Jackson (RB, Packers)
Rushed for 113 yards and caught two passes to help defeat Detroit.

"I have that type of sneaky speed where a lot of guys don't think I'm going to run that fast until I get by them."

~André Davis, after returning two kickoffs for touchdowns in Houston's win over the Jaguars.

PLAYOFFS

JACKSONVILLE 31, @ PITTSBURGH 29

THE JAGUARS SHOWED THAT THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING, EVEN IF IT TAKES UNTIL THE FINAL SECONDS.

No team had ever beaten the Steelers twice in a season on their home turf. But expressing a complete lack of appreciation for that trivia, Jacksonville posted its second Steel City victory in three weeks, riding a late field goal to earn a truly wild 31-29 wild card win.

When Josh Scobee's 25-yard kick with 37 seconds remaining split the uprights, it allowed the Jaguars to walk off the field victorious even after squandering an 18-point, fourth-quarter lead.

"Right before we went out on the last drive, I pulled the guys together and said, 'This is what we're here for,'" said Jaguars head coach Jack Del Rio. "'Now let's go out and make some plays and win it.'"

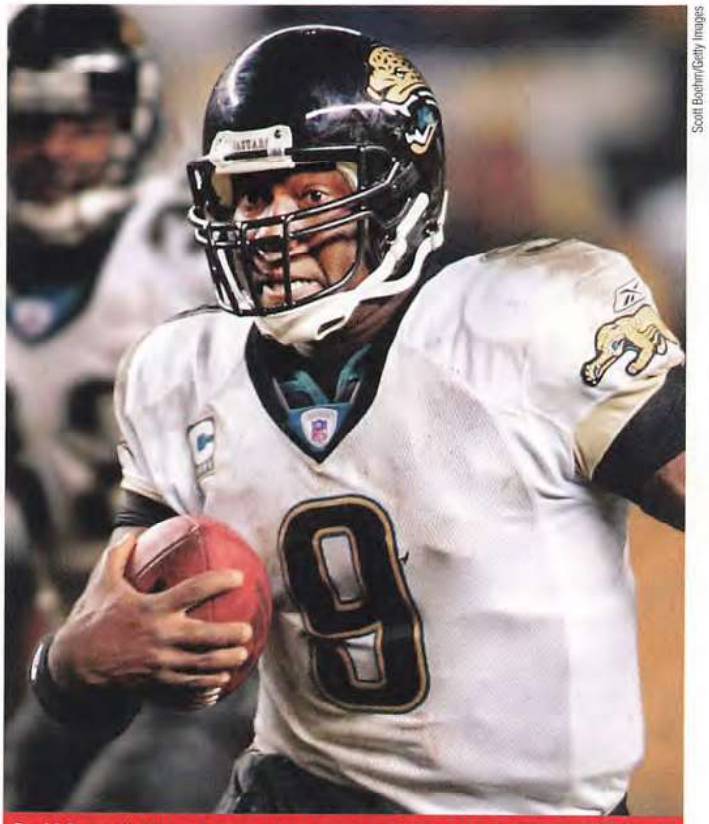
For the first three quarters, this didn't figure as a game that would be settled by last-minute heroics. After the Steelers' first possession was capped by Najeh Davenport's 1-yard TD run, the Jaguars dominated. They tallied 21 straight points before halftime, a blitz that started when Maurice Jones-Drew returned the ensuing kickoff 96 yards to set up a short Fred Taylor run. That was soon followed by a Rashean Mathis 63-yard interception return for a TD. Mathis then added a second pickoff that led to a 43-yard David Garrard to Jones-Drew touchdown, making the score 21-7 with 8:34 to go in the second quarter.

Even after Pittsburgh's Jeff Reed kicked a 28-yard field goal late in the third quarter, the Jaguars answered with Jones-Drew's second touchdown run of the game, this a 10-yard sprint that built the lead up to 28-10.

But in the fourth quarter, Pittsburgh came back when Ben Roethlisberger connected on two quick TD passes—a 37-yard strike to Santonio Holmes and a 14-yard score to Heath Miller. Davenport's 1-yard plunge completed the rally, putting the Steelers in front, 29-28, with 6:21 to play. Still, by failing on a pair of two-point conversions, Pittsburgh could be beaten—not just tied—on a field goal.

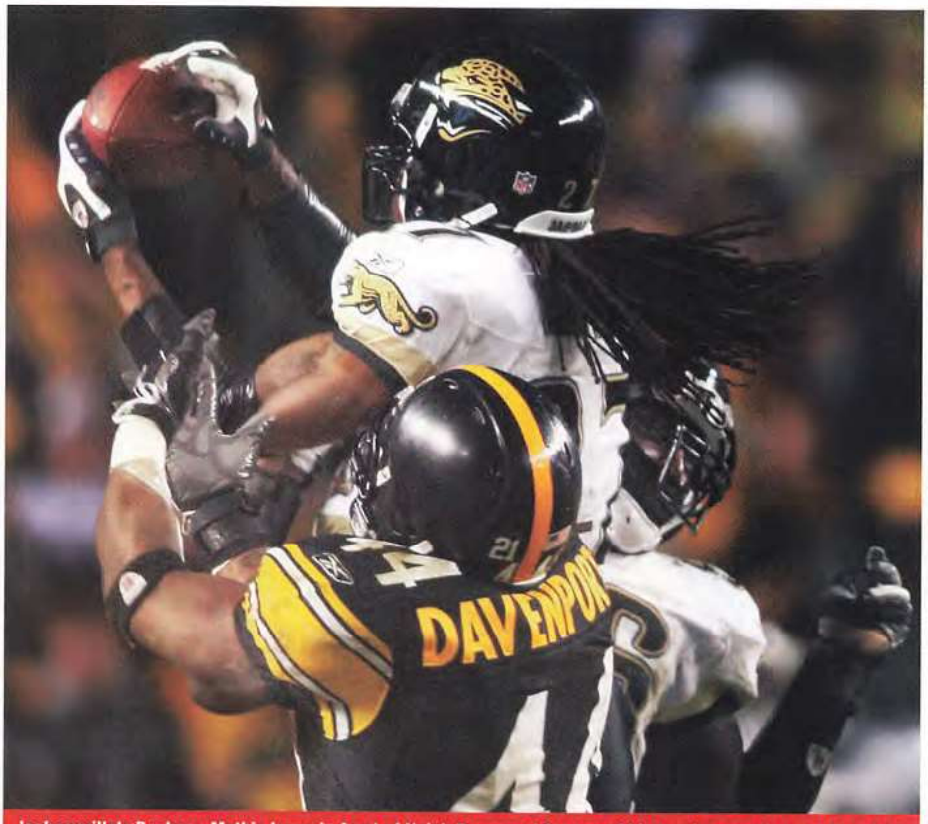
With less than two minutes remaining and the Jaguars facing a critical fourth-and-two, Garrard—making his first career playoff start—scrambled 32 yards for a first down deep in Steelers territory. Four plays later, Scobee sealed the deal with his foot, sending Jacksonville to a divisional-round meeting with the Patriots.

Connecticut-based sportswriter Mark Preston wrote the Wild Card and Divisional Playoff recaps for the Super Bowl XLII Game Program.



Scott Boehm/Getty Images

David Garrard's 32-yard run put the Jaguars in position for the winning field goal.



Jason Bridge/US Presswire

Jacksonville's Rashean Mathis leaps in front of Najeh Davenport for one of his two interceptions on the night.

AFC WILD CARD

@ San Diego 17, Tennessee 6

THE CHARGERS DIDN'T NEED A SECOND CHANCE, JUST A STRONG SECOND HALF, TO GET ON THE PATH TO A PLAYOFF WIN.

San Diego rallied for 17 unanswered points after intermission to eliminate the Tennessee Titans, 17-6, and notch the franchise's first postseason triumph since its run to Super Bowl XXIX.

After starting the season 1-3, the Chargers finished 11-5, rattling off six wins in a row down the stretch to capture their second straight AFC West crown. This game, against a Titans team showing up in the playoffs for the first time in four years, was a microcosm of the Bolts' season—a slow start followed by a furious and formidable surge.

"These players have fought through a lot of ups and downs and a lot of disappointments," said first-year Chargers head coach Norv Turner. "This is a new start for them."

The two teams had met in Week 14, a thriller won by the Chargers, 23-17, in overtime. San Diego running back LaDainian Tomlinson rushed for 146 yards in that game, his final carry going 16 yards for the tie-breaking touchdown. In this playoff rematch, the Titans' defense was keyed on stopping the NFL's rushing leader, and it succeeded for the most part—holding Tomlinson to just 42 yards.

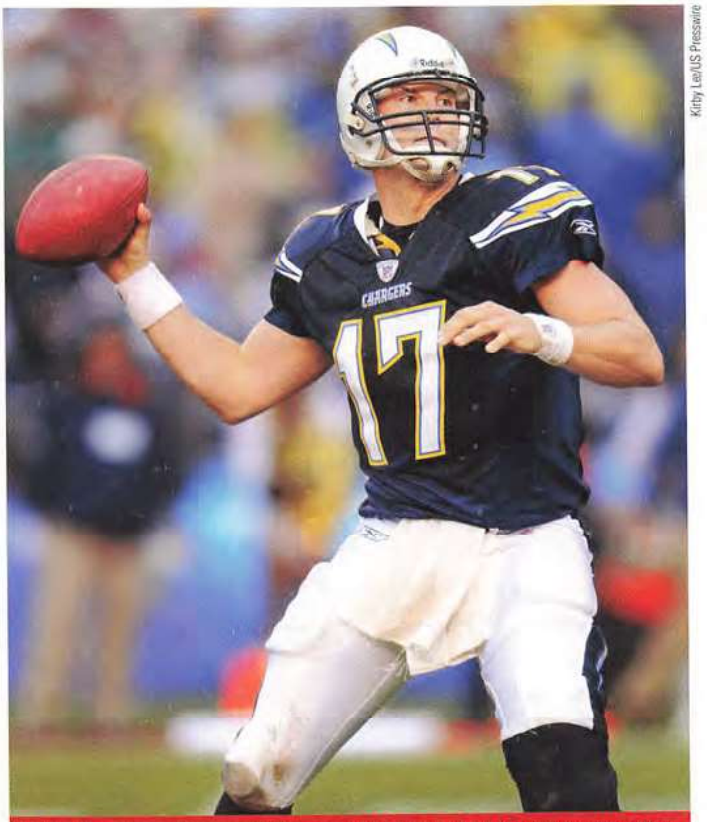
But while Tennessee kept the Chargers off the scoreboard in the first half, its offense—missing four starters due to injuries—could manage just a pair of Rob Bironas field goals. He hit a 30-yarder in the first quarter, then knocked through a 44-yarder at the end of the second.

After halftime, the game's complexion changed as Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers came out firing. He connected on five of six passes on the opening drive, taking his team to the Tennessee 2 and setting up Nate Kaeding's 20-yard field goal that cut the Titans' lead in half. San Diego moved ahead, 10-6, on its next possession when Rivers found Vincent Jackson open for a 25-yard scoring strike.

Tennessee had a chance to draw closer early in the fourth quarter, but Bironas—who led the league by making 35 field goals during the regular season—misfired on a 38-yard kick.

That opened the door for the Chargers to get an insurance tally. They drove to the Titans 1-yard line where, facing a fourth down, Turner elected to go for it. He called on Tomlinson, who muscled into the end zone to secure the win and a ticket to Indianapolis for a date with the defending Super Bowl-champion Colts.

"It didn't come easy," said Tomlinson. "But I'm just happy to get that first win."



Kirby Lee/US Presswire

Philip Rivers found his range in the second half, when he led three scoring drives.

Donald Miralle/Getty Images

San Diego's Vincent Jackson takes on the hit of Cortland Finnegan as he dives for the go-ahead touchdown.

PLAYOFFS

@ SEATTLE 35, WASHINGTON 14

FINDING THEMSELVES TRAILING AFTER ALLOWING TWO QUICK TOUCHDOWNS, THE SEAHAWKS SUDDENLY TOOK FLIGHT.

The emotional roller-coaster that had carried the Redskins through the final weeks of the regular season ground to a halt in this game's thrilling final quarter, when Seattle erupted for 22 points to earn a come-from-behind 35-14 victory.

"The fourth quarter is when you have to go out and earn the money," said Seahawks cornerback Marcus Trufant, who intercepted Washington's Todd Collins with just over five minutes to play and returned it 78 yards for a touchdown—one of three Seattle TDs down the stretch that pulled out the win.

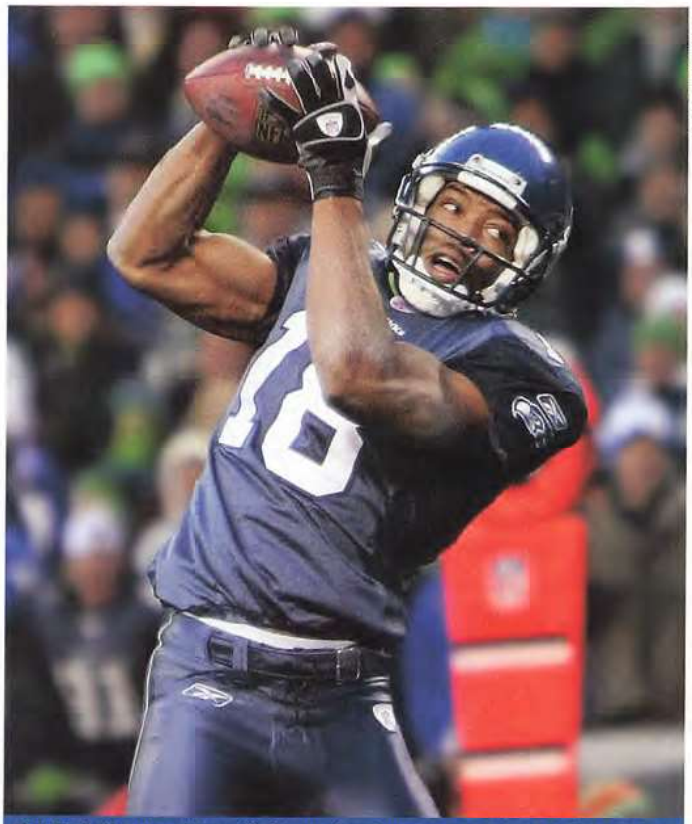
The vaunted Seahawks' defense had held the Redskins scoreless for three quarters. Meanwhile, Seattle built a 13-0 lead on a 17-yard Leonard Weaver touchdown run on its second possession of the game, followed by a 50-yard Josh Brown field goal in the second quarter and Brown's 33-yard kick in the third. But just seven seconds into the final period, Antwaan Randle El caught a 7-yard pass from Collins that got the Redskins on the board and up off the mat.

Suddenly, Washington looked very much like the team that came into this game as the NFC's hottest squad; one that had won four straight games to clinch a playoff berth following the tragic death of safety Sean Taylor. When Taylor's replacement LaRon Landry intercepted quarterback Matt Hasselbeck on Seattle's next possession—setting up a 30-yard touchdown pass from Collins to Santana Moss for a 14-13 Redskins lead—it seemed that Washington had wrestled away the momentum for good.

That feeling got stronger when Seahawks returner Nate Burleson failed to handle the ensuing kickoff and the Redskins recovered the ball on the 19. But Seattle's defense dug in, and when Washington kicker Shaun Suisham missed a 30-yard field goal, momentum drifted away with the kick.

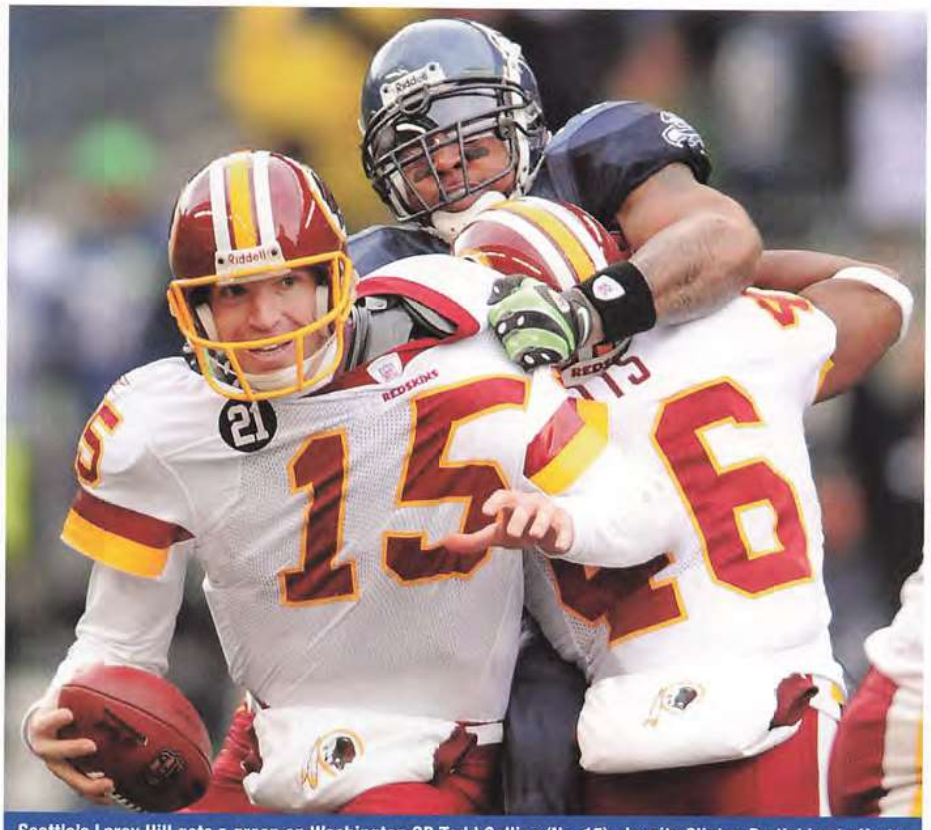
"It was a momentum-oriented game," said Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren. "We had it earlier; in the third quarter, they got it, and when they missed the field goal, we got it back."

Two possessions later, Hasselbeck hit wide receiver D.J. Hackett for a 20-yard score, and the two-point conversion put Seattle up 21-14. Trufant's pick, followed by another interception return for a touchdown by cornerback Jordan Babineaux in the final minute of play, sealed the victory and a trip to Green Bay.



Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

D.J. Hackett comes down with the go-ahead touchdown during Seattle's victory.



Kirby Lee/US Presswire

Seattle's Leroy Hill gets a grasp on Washington QB Todd Collins (No. 15), despite Clinton Portis' best efforts.

NFC WILD CARD

N.Y. GIANTS 24, @ TAMPA BAY 14

BY DOMINATING THE HOST BUCCANEERS, THE GIANTS SHOWED THE ONLY ROAD BLUES THEY HAVE ARE THEIR UNIFORMS.

Not unlike country crooner Willie Nelson, the New York Giants this season have proven themselves as a bunch that just can't wait to get on the road again. Coming off a 7-1 regular-season away record, the Giants traveled south for their playoff opener and scored a convincing 24-14 win over NFC South champion Tampa Bay.

"As a team, we seem to perform better on the road," said Giants defensive end Michael Strahan, who had nine tackles and a sack. "And that's a great thing, because when it's the playoffs, if we're going to go as far as we want, we have to win every game on the road."

This particular win proved something of a coming-out for the Giants' offense and their quarterback Eli Manning, who was looking for his first playoff win in his third postseason appearance. There could not have been a much better test than the Bucs' defense, top-rated in the NFL against the pass.

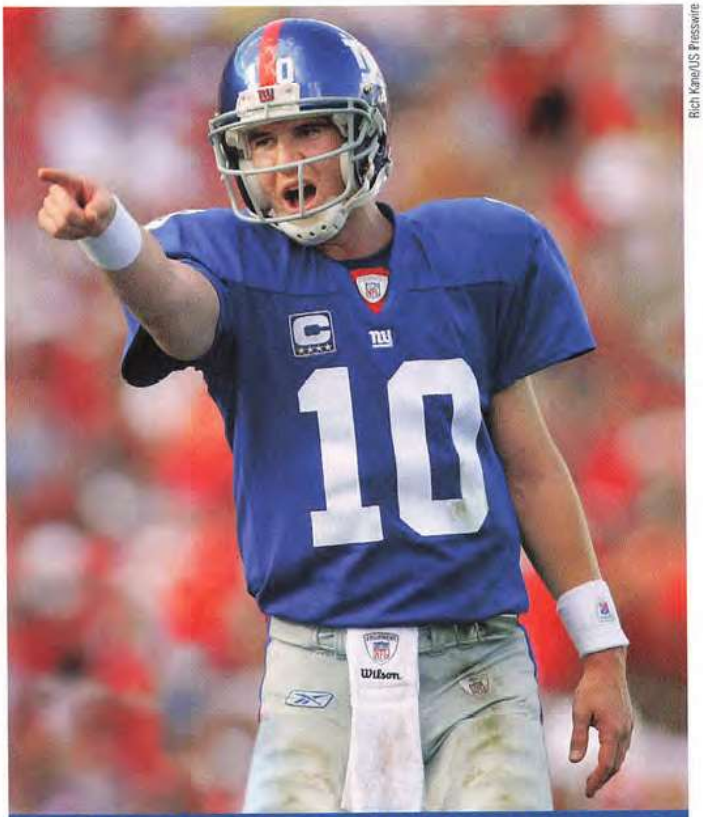
It didn't start out all that promising—in the first quarter, the Giants failed to pick up a first down and fell behind 7-0 when Earnest Graham's short run capped a 10-play Tampa Bay drive. But the visitors came to life in the second period when Brandon Jacobs scored twice, hauling in a 5-yard pass from Manning and then running for an 8-yard touchdown.

New York would never relinquish that lead. Tampa Bay's Micheal Spurlock fumbled away the opening kick of the third quarter, and the Giants made the miscue a costly one when Lawrence Tynes hit a 25-yard field goal that extended the lead to 17-7. The two teams then exchanged fourth-quarter touchdowns—New York's coming on Manning's 4-yard pass to Amani Toomer before Tampa Bay answered with a Jeff Garcia-to-Alex Smith toss with just over three minutes remaining.

Manning connected with seven different receivers on the day and finished 20-of-27 for 185 yards and a pair of touchdowns, while the backfield duo of Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw rushed for exactly 100 yards. Defensively, New York held the Bucs to just 69 yards on the ground and twice picked off Garcia. Corey Webster had a goal-line interception in the third quarter, while R.W. McQuarters' pick with 1:53 to go ended any lingering suspense.

"This is a great win for us," said Manning. "The guys all really stepped up today. We're all fired up to go to Dallas."

On the road again.



Rich Kane/US Presswire

Eli Manning (20-of-27, 2 TDs) made the right calls to win his first playoff game.

Rich Kane/US Presswire

Michael Strahan (nine tackles and a sack) sparked a Giants defense that also forced three Tampa Bay turnovers.

AFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

@ New England 31, Jacksonville 20

THE PATRIOTS CARRIED PERFECTION INTO THE POSTSEASON WITH A NEAR-PERFECT PERFORMANCE FROM QB TOM BRADY.

Brady connected on 26 of 28 passes for three touchdowns in leading New England to a 31-20 victory over the Jaguars. His 92.9 completion percentage marked the best-ever for a QB in regular or postseason play—just another milestone in a season in which the Patriots rewrote the record books on a weekly basis.

"I'm all Zen," joked Brady about his effort. "I just hope I can be Zen-like for a few more weeks."

This was a game that figured to feature plenty of points. New England possessed the NFL's top-ranked passing offense, while the Jaguars finished second in the league in rushing. And although the Jacksonville ground game never found its footing, the visitors matched the Patriots in the first half by taking to the air.

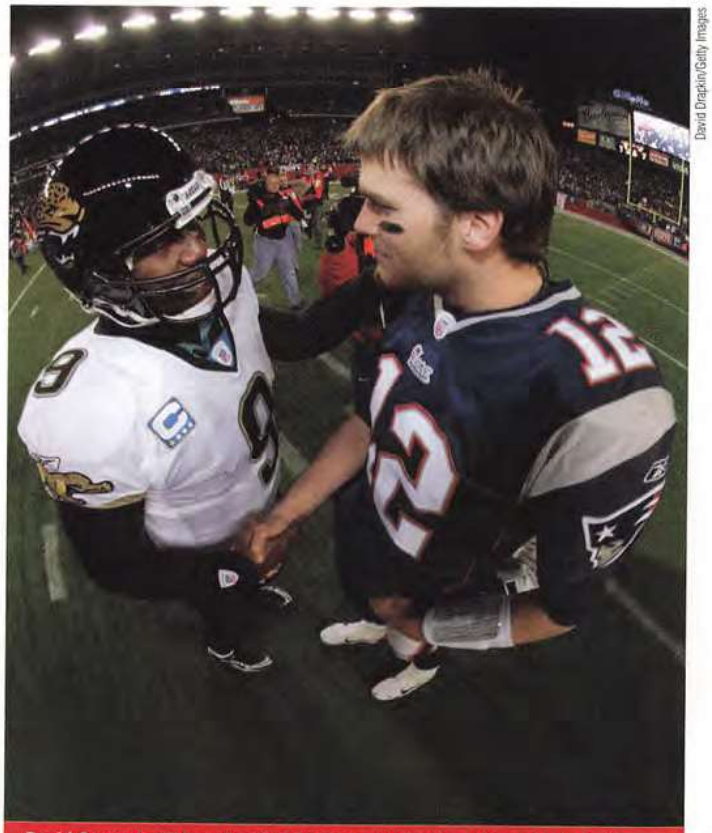
The Jaguars jumped out to a 7-0 lead on their first possession, scoring on an 8-yard pass from David Garrard to Matt Jones that finished off a nine-play, 80-yard drive. New England answered back with a 74-yard march, ending with a 3-yard scoring strike from Brady to Benjamin Watson. The second quarter was similarly even. After a Garrard fumble was recovered by New England's Mike Vrabel, Patriots running back Laurence Maroney scored on a 1-yard run. Jacksonville, however, tied things up before halftime on a 6-yard pass from Garrard to Ernest Wilford.

Taking the opening kickoff of the third quarter, the Patriots drove 82 yards in 11 plays to set up Brady's nifty 6-yard TD throw to Wes Welker that made the score 21-14.

Josh Scobee pulled the Jaguars within four points with his 39-yard field goal, but New England gained separation by countering with a 76-yard drive capped by a Brady-to-Watson touchdown strike. The teams traded field goals in the fourth quarter—Scobee hitting from 25 yards to make the score 28-20, before the Patriots' Stephen Gostkowski punched through a 35-yard kick that accounted for the final margin of victory.

Jacksonville's last hope was halted when Rodney Harrison picked off Garrard with 4:34 remaining. It marked Harrison's fourth consecutive playoff game with an interception, tying an NFL record.

"Offensively, we had a pretty decent night," said New England coach Bill Belichick. "But we realize it only gets tougher every step of the way now."



David Draiklo/Getty Images

David Garrard and Tom Brady both gave outstanding efforts for their teams.

Jim Isgash/Getty Images

Mike Vrabel (No. 50) and Tedy Bruschi celebrate a second-quarter fumble recovery that set up a Patriots TD.

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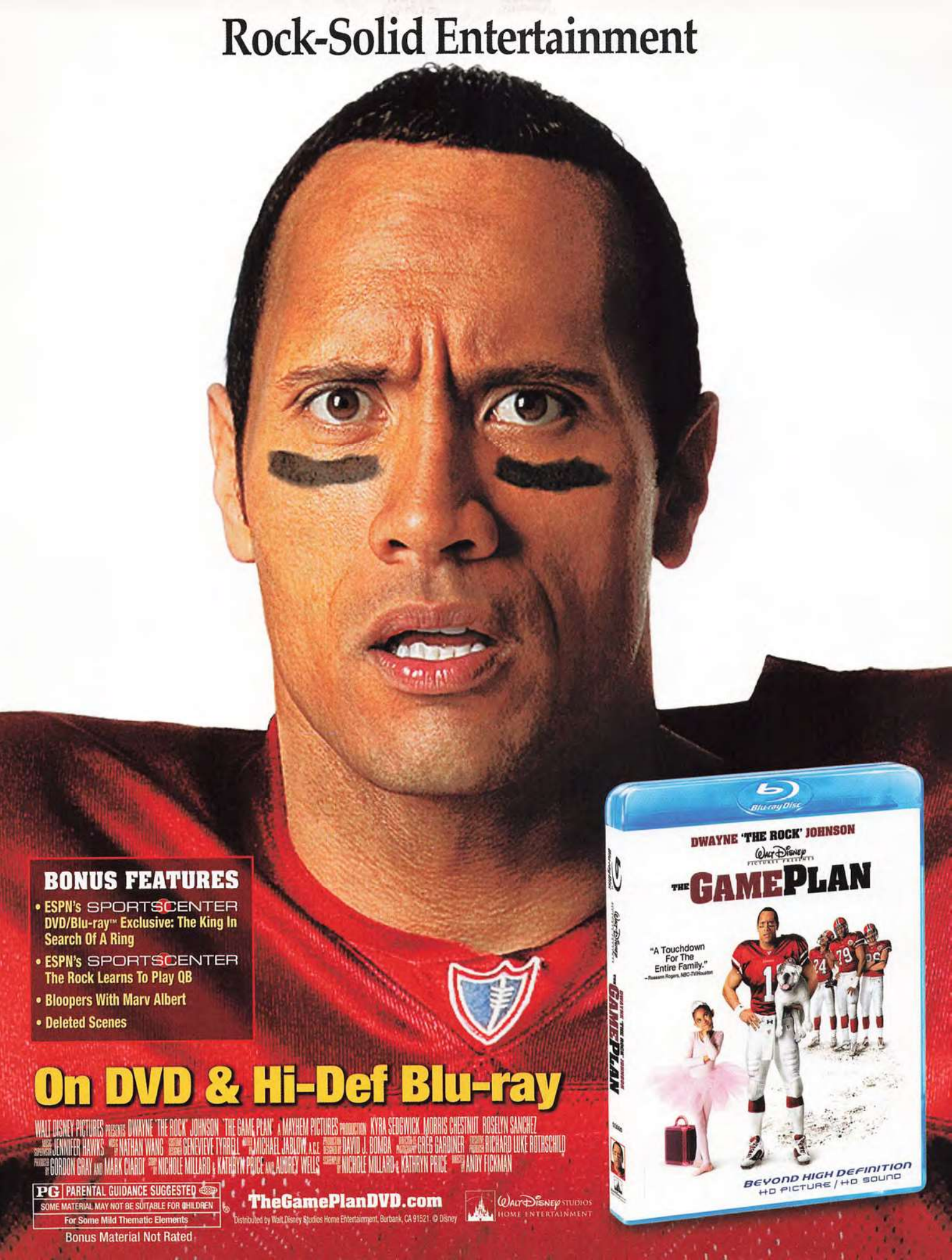

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AFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

SAN DIEGO 28, @ INDIANAPOLIS 24

SAN DIEGO'S "B" TEAM BROUGHT ITS "A" GAME, PUSHING THE CHARGERS PAST THE DEFENDING SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONS.

With NFL rushing leader LaDainian Tomlinson and high-caliber quarterback Philip Rivers both on the sideline late in the game with injuries, it fell to backup QB Billy Volek and running back Michael Turner to provide the voltage that powered the Bolts to a 28-24 victory over the Colts.

"I've never been involved in a game that had so many guys step up and make big plays," said Chargers head coach Norv Turner, whose squad won for the eighth straight time. "We won this game as a team."

The back-and-forth affair featured five lead changes. Indianapolis scored on its first possession when Peyton Manning orchestrated a 9-play, 76-yard drive that ended with a 25-yard touchdown strike to tight end Dallas Clark. San Diego knotted the game at 8:38 of the second quarter when Rivers connected with Vincent Jackson on a 14-yard scoring pass, but Adam Vinatieri's 46-yard field goal moved the Colts back on top, 10-7, at the half.

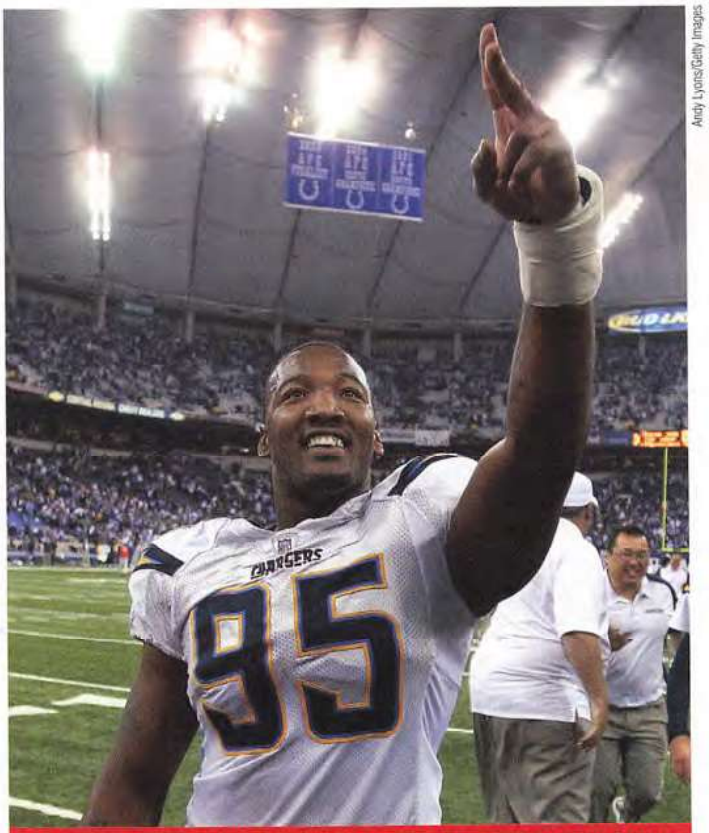
After intermission, Tomlinson made it only as far as the sideline, having hurt his knee on a second-quarter carry. Enter Turner, whose 1,257 career rushing yards are some 200 shy of what Tomlinson posted just this season. But on this day, Turner would carry the ball 17 times for 71 yards, keying each of the Chargers' three second-half scoring drives.

San Diego took its first lead when Rivers capped a 6-play, 83-yard march with a 30-yard scoring strike to Chris Chambers. The Colts then regained the upperhand on a Manning-to-Reggie Wayne 9-yard TD.

On the final play of the third quarter, Rivers connected with running back Darren Sproles on a screen pass that turned into a 56-yard score. The play proved costly, though, with Rivers spraining his knee, putting the fourth quarter in the hands of Volek.

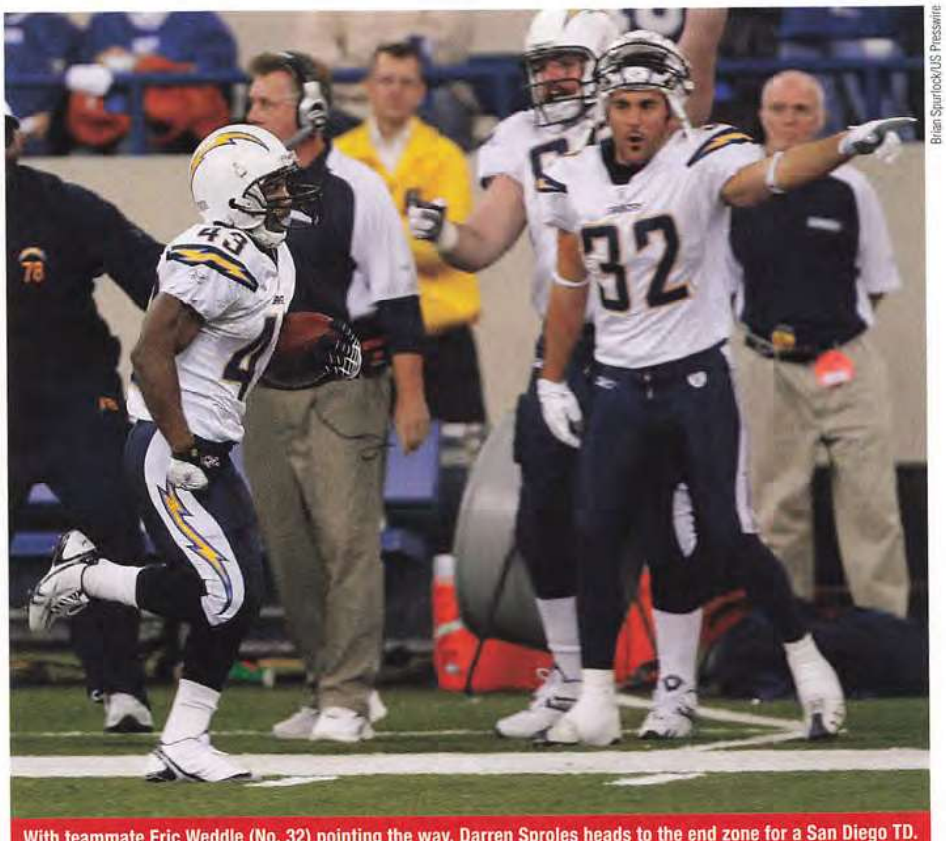
The Colts moved back in front, 24-21, when Manning found a wide-open Anthony Gonzalez down the left sideline on a 55-yard scoring play, but then Volek directed a slick eight-play, 78-yard march—finished off by his 1-yard QB sneak with 4:50 to go—that gave the Chargers the lead for good.

Indianapolis got the ball back two more times, but the Chargers' defense stepped up on both occasions, including a goal-line stand. And when Manning's fourth-and-five pass to Clark in the final minute slipped through the tight end's fingers, so did the Colts' chances of repeating as Super Bowl champions.



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

The Chargers' Shaun Phillips was pointing toward a showdown with the Patriots.



Brian Spurlock/US Presswire

With teammate Eric Weddle (No. 32) pointing the way, Darren Sproles heads to the end zone for a San Diego TD.

NFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

@ Green Bay 42, Seattle 20

AFTER THE SEAHAWKS SOARED TO AN EARLY LEAD, THE PACKERS STORMED BACK AND THEN PULLED AWAY FOR THE VICTORY.

The combination of a hot offense and cold weather were enough to ground Seattle's season, with Green Bay prevailing, 42-20, in the snow at Lambeau Field.

Packers quarterback Brett Favre connected on 18 of 23 passes for 173 yards and three touchdowns, while running back Ryan Grant added a franchise postseason record 201 rushing yards and scored three times.

"I was watching the weather all day," said Favre, "and thinking, 'Just give us one of those big snow games.' I wanted to play where you couldn't see the field, where the snowplow comes out, and it just keeps getting worse."

Favre got his wish, but before the weather turned bad, it seemed that things couldn't get much worse for the home team. Grant fumbled on Green Bay's first two possessions and both turnovers led to Seattle scores—a 1-yard Shaun Alexander run and an 11-yard touchdown pass from Matt Hasselbeck to Bobby Engram—leaving the Packers trailing, 14-0, barely four minutes into the game.

But Green Bay knotted things up before the first quarter was complete on a 15-yard connection from Favre to Greg Jennings and Grant's first TD run of the day, a 1-yard plunge that capped a nine-play, 64-yard drive. Those 28 combined points tied an NFL postseason record for points scored in the first quarter—and the blizzard was just beginning.

A second Favre-to-Jennings TD, this on a 2-yard pass, gave the Packers their first lead of the day. Although Seattle kicker Josh Brown cut that lead to four with his 29-yard field goal, Green Bay scored again before halftime on Grant's second TD run, making it 28-17.

The Seahawks managed just three second-half points—on Brown's 27-yard field goal in the third quarter—and even that was sandwiched between a Favre TD pass to Brandon Jackson and Grant's third touchdown of the game. Incredibly, after their disastrous first two possessions, the Packers scored on their next six, burying the Seahawks under an avalanche of tenacity on both sides of the ball.

Kirby Lee/US Presswire

Green Bay's Brett Favre (18-of-23, 173 yards, 3 TDs) was right at home in the snow at Lambeau Field.

Green Bay held the ball for 34 minutes and amassed 408 yards of offense, while its defense limited Seattle to just 200 total yards.

"Once again, we overcame and made plays when we needed to make them," said Favre, who joined Joe Montana as the only QBs in NFL history to throw for more than 5,000 postseason yards. "We were resilient. How far that carries us remains to be seen, but to this point, I think we have surprised a lot of people—including myself."

Jeff Haynsch/US Presswire

Cornerback Al Harris prevents Seattle wide receiver Ben Obomanu from making a reception during a 42-20 win that put Green Bay in the NFC Championship Game.

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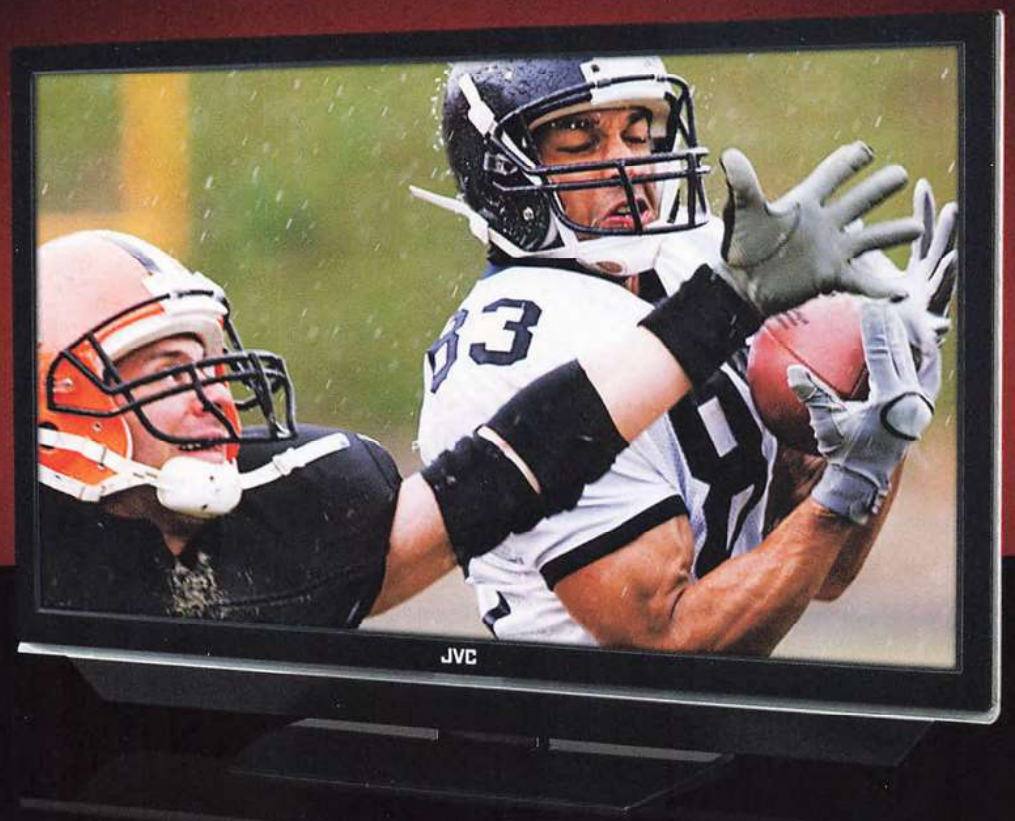

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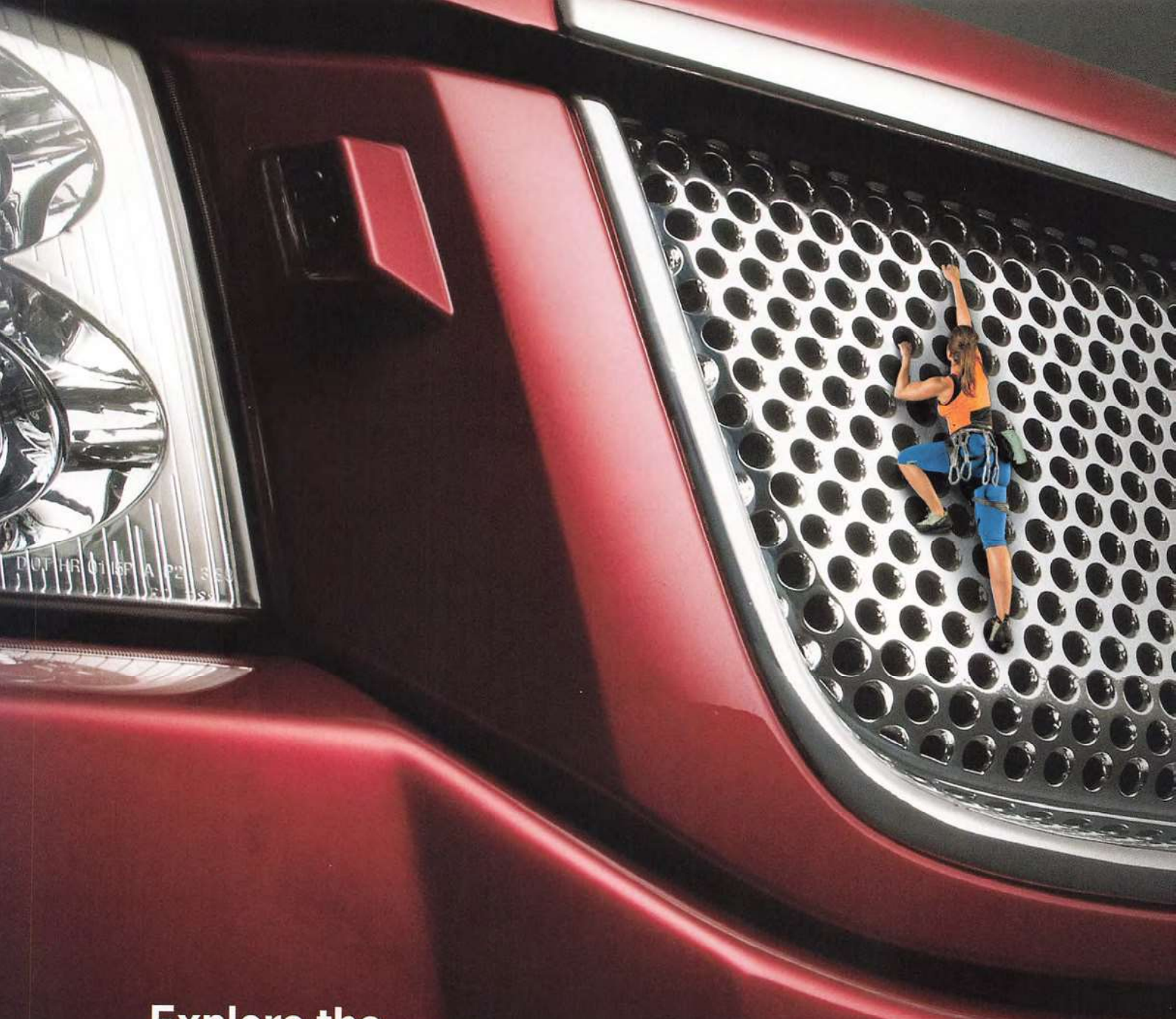

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NFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

N.Y. GIANTS 21, @ DALLAS 17

WITH THEIR DRAMATIC VICTORY OVER THE COWBOYS, THE GIANTS GAVE THE GREATEST ROAD SHOW IN SPORTS AN EXTENDED RUN.

New York won its ninth consecutive away game, an NFL single-season record, by ousting the NFC's top-seeded team, 21-17. The win also avenged the Giants' lone road loss of the year, a 45-35 Week One setback in Big D.

This time around, it was the Giants' opportunistic offense and their own "Big D" that earned New York its first trip to the NFC title game in seven seasons.

"It's a great feeling," said quarterback Eli Manning, who was again solid behind center while completing 12 of 18 passes for 163 yards and two touchdowns. "It was a great game and a big team win."

This marked the 92nd meeting between these division rivals, but incredibly, the first-ever in the postseason. The Giants got on the board on their first possession with a 52-yard touchdown pass from Manning to Amani Toomer that saw the receiver dodge several would-be tacklers after catching the ball.

Dallas tied the score just moments into the second quarter on a Tony Romo to Terrell Owens 5-yard pass, and went ahead on its next possession by driving 90 yards over 20 plays while eating more than 10 minutes off the clock. The time-consuming march came to a close on Marion Barber's 1-yard plunge. But Manning needed a mere 46 seconds to answer back, putting together a brilliant 7-play drive and tying the game, 14-14, by firing his second TD to Toomer.

The Cowboys opened up the second half with another lengthy drive, this one capped by Nick Folk's 34-yard field goal to go ahead 17-14. Again, however, the Giants responded, with Brandon Jacobs crossing the goal line on a 1-yard run early in the fourth quarter with what would be the game's final points.

Dallas had the ball three more times, but the Giants' defense, which led the league with 53 sacks, was at its finest down the stretch. Romo was sacked twice in the quarter and pressure forced him into a critical intentional grounding call with just over four minutes left to play. When R.W. McQuarters intercepted a last-gasp toss into the end zone with nine seconds remaining, New York had punched its ticket to Green Bay—just one win away from the ultimate road game.

The Giants were outgained for the game, 336-230, but Dallas was whistled for 11 penalties compared to New York's three.

"This is obviously a great win for the New York Giants," said head coach Tom Coughlin. "I am so proud of our players—they really rose to this challenge."

Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

Brandon Jacobs' fourth-quarter touchdown run put the Giants ahead to stay against the Cowboys.

Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

Amani Toomer extends into the end zone just before being brought down by Dallas safety Ken Hamlin. The touchdown pulled the Giants even, 14-14, at halftime.

2007 NFL STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSER RATING

Player	Team	Comp	Att	Yds	TD	Int	Rating
Tom Brady	NE	398	578	4,806	50	8	117.2
Ben Roethlisberger	PIT	264	404	3,154	32	11	104.1
David Garrard	JAC	208	325	2,509	18	3	102.2
Peyton Manning	IND	337	515	4,040	31	14	98.0
Tony Romo	DAL	335	520	4,211	36	19	97.4
Brett Favre	GB	356	535	4,155	28	15	95.7
Jeff Garcia	TB	209	327	2,440	13	4	94.6
Matt Hasselbeck	SEA	352	562	3,966	28	12	91.4
Donovan McNabb	PHI	291	473	3,324	19	7	89.9
Kurt Warner	ARI	281	451	3,417	27	17	89.8

RUSHING YARDS

Player	Team	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
LaDainian Tomlinson	SD	315	1,474	4.7	15	49
Adrian Peterson	MIN	238	1,341	5.6	12	73
Brian Westbrook	PHI	278	1,333	4.8	7	36
Willie Parker	PIT	321	1,316	4.1	2	32
Jamal Lewis	CLE	298	1,304	4.4	9	66
Clinton Portis	WAS	325	1,262	3.9	11	32
Edgerrin James	ARI	324	1,222	3.8	7	27
Willis McGahee	BAL	294	1,207	4.1	7	46
Fred Taylor	JAC	223	1,202	5.4	5	80
Thomas Jones	NYJ	310	1,119	3.6	1	36

RECEPTIONS

Player	Team	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
T.J. Houshmandzadeh	CIN	112	1,143	10.2	42	12
Wes Welker	NE	112	1,175	10.5	42	8
Reggie Wayne	IND	104	1,510	14.5	64	10
Derrick Mason	BAL	103	1,087	10.6	79	5
Brandon Marshall	DEN	102	1,325	13.0	68	7
Larry Fitzgerald	ARI	100	1,409	14.1	48	10
Tony Gonzalez	KC	99	1,172	11.8	31	5
Marques Colston	NO	98	1,202	12.3	45	11
Randy Moss	NE	98	1,493	15.2	65	23
Jason Witten	DAL	96	1,145	11.9	53	7

YARDS FROM SCRIMMAGE

Player	Team	Total	Rush	Rec
Brian Westbrook	PHI	2104	1333	771
LaDainian Tomlinson	SD	1949	1474	475
Clinton Portis	WAS	1651	1262	389
Adrian Peterson	MIN	1609	1341	268
Jamal Lewis	CLE	1552	1304	248
Frank Gore	SF	1538	1102	436
Reggie Wayne	IND	1514	4	1510
Randy Moss	NE	1493	0	1493
Chad Johnson	CIN	1487	47	1440
Willie Parker	PIT	1480	1316	164

INTERCEPTIONS

Player	Team	Int	TDs	Yds	Long
Antonio Cromartie	SD	10	1	144	70
O.J. Atogwe	STL	8	1	125	52
Ed Reed	BAL	7	0	130	32
Marcus Trufant	SEA	7	1	150	84
Leigh Bodden	CLE	6	0	75	26
Anthony Henry	DAL	6	1	81	28
Thomas Howard	OAK	6	2	172	66
Asante Samuel	NE	6	1	89	42
Atari Bigby	GB	5	0	50	22
Dre' Bly	DEN	5	0	71	37

SACKS

Player	Team	Tckls	Solo	Ast	Sacks
Jared Allen	KC	64	55	9	15.5
Patrick Kerney	SEA	60	49	11	14.5
DeMarcus Ware	DAL	84	60	24	14.0
Mario Williams	HOU	59	43	16	14.0
Osi Umenyiora	NYG	52	40	12	13.0
Trent Cole	PHI	70	49	21	12.5
Elvis Dumervil	DEN	39	34	5	12.5
Greg Ellis	DAL	31	24	7	12.5
Shawne Merriman	SD	68	54	14	12.5
Mike Vrabel	NE	77	55	22	12.5

SCORING (NON-KICKERS)

Player	Team	Total	Rush	Rec	Ret	Def	Pts
Randy Moss	NE	23	0	23	0	0	138
LaDainian Tomlinson	SD	18	15	3	0	0	108
Braylon Edwards	CLE	16	0	16	0	0	96
Joseph Addai	IND	15	12	3	0	0	90
Terrell Owens	DAL	15	0	15	0	0	90
Adrian Peterson	MIN	13	12	1	0	0	78
Marion Barber	DAL	12	10	2	0	0	72
Plaxico Burress	NYG	12	0	12	0	0	72
T.J. Houshmandzadeh	CIN	12	0	12	0	0	72
Greg Jennings	GB	12	0	12	0	0	72

SCORING (KICKERS)

Player	Team	FGM	FGA	Long	XPM	XPA	Pts
Mason Crosby	GB	31	39	53	48	48	141
Stephen Gostkowski	NE	21	24	45	74	74	137
Rob Bironas	TEN	35	39	56	28	28	133
Nicholas Folk	DAL	26	31	53	53	53	131
Shayne Graham	CIN	31	34	48	37	37	130
Josh Brown	SEA	28	34	54	43	43	127
Robbie Gould	CHI	31	36	49	33	33	126
Jason Hanson	DET	29	35	53	35	36	122
Phil Dawson	CLE	26	30	51	42	43	120
Matt Bryant	TB	28	33	49	34	34	118

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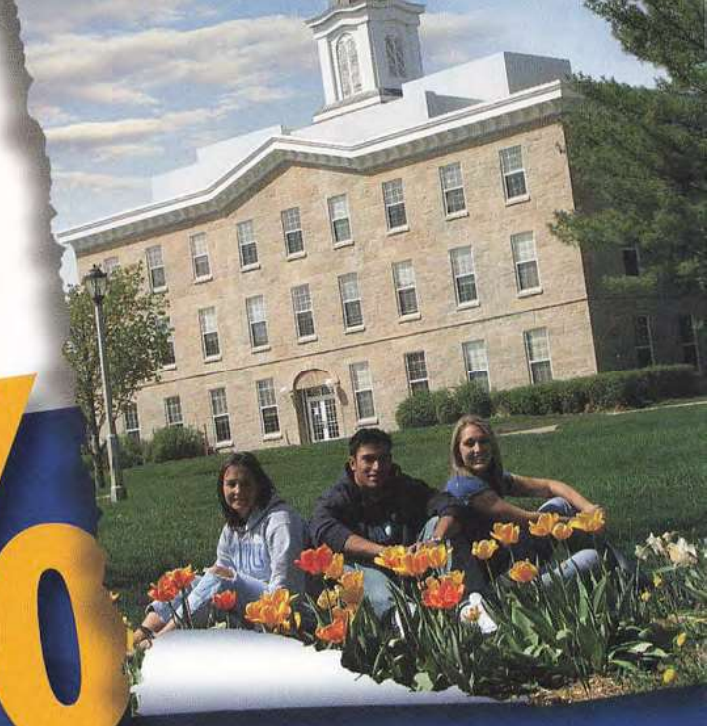

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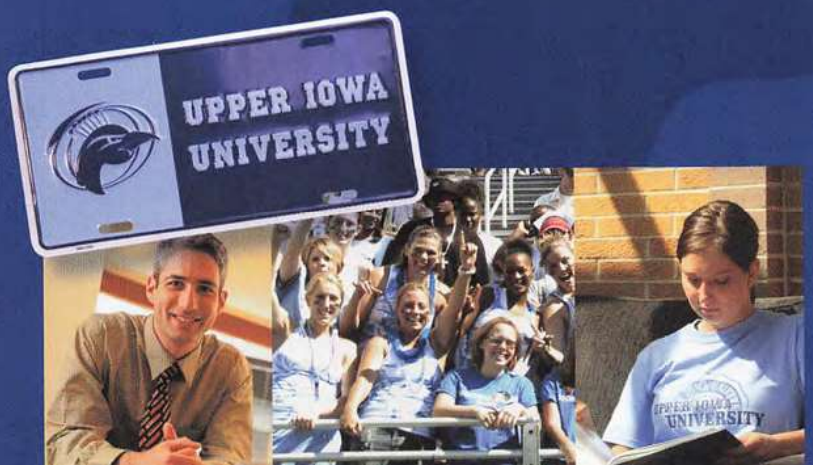

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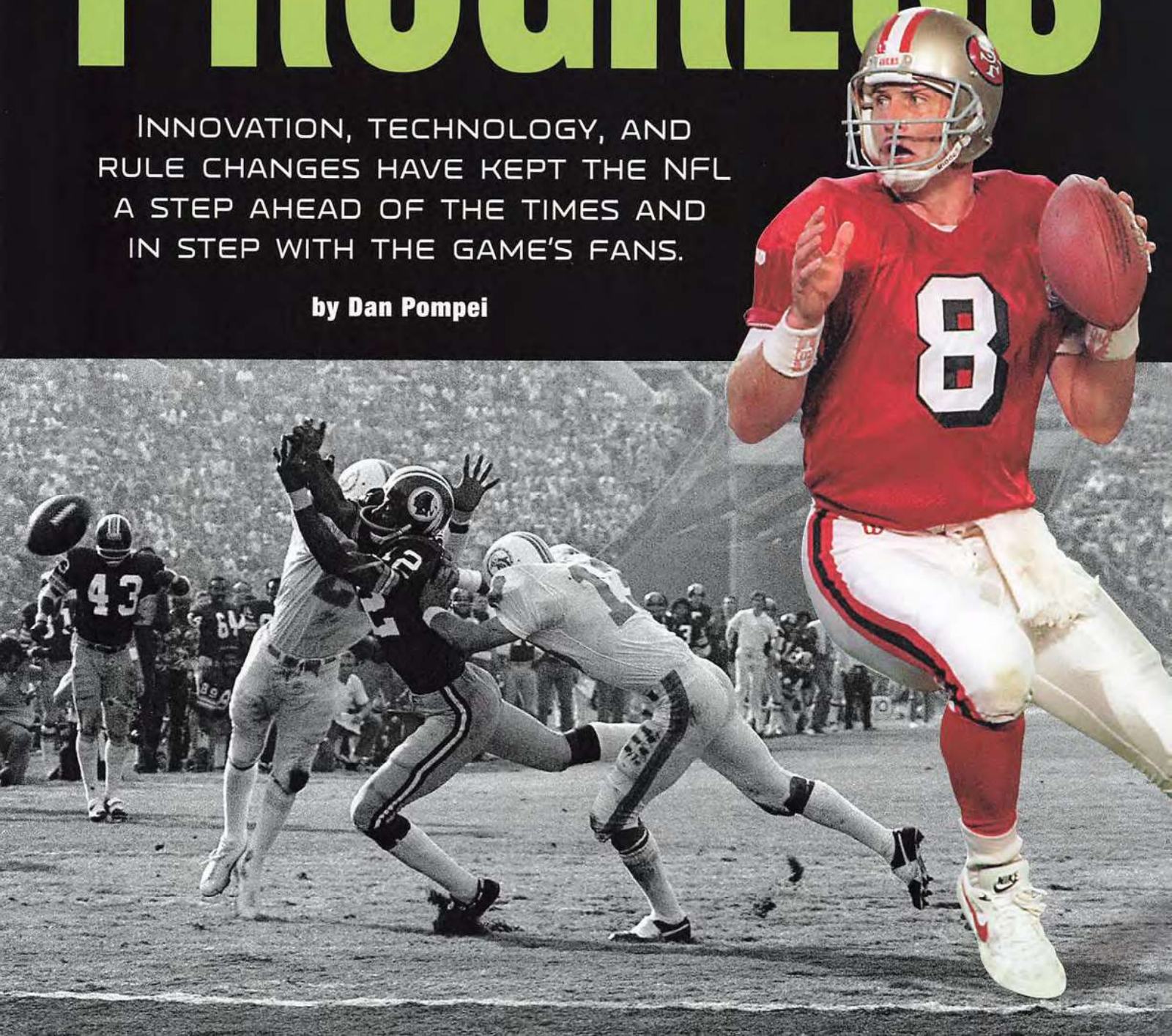
FORWARD PROGRESS

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND RULE CHANGES HAVE KEPT THE NFL A STEP AHEAD OF THE TIMES AND IN STEP WITH THE GAME'S FANS.

by Dan Pompei



A Super Bowl these days is guaranteed to have football fans jamming into the host stadium, into the host city, and in front of their television sets.

The whole event, from the start of Super Bowl week to the presentation of the Vince Lombardi Trophy, exudes excitement. What few people realize is that the first Super Bowl—held in Los Angeles in January 1967—barely caused a traffic jam or a ratings ripple, being played in a stadium with nearly 40,000 empty seats while going largely ignored by a skeptical public.

A big reason for the game's stunning popularity surge can be attributed to the NFL's evolution—the way the league has adjusted to imbalances, strategic advances, and changing times.

Many of the Super Bowl's most thrilling moments—John Stallworth's 73-yard fourth-quarter touchdown catch in Super Bowl XIV, the game-winning 92-yard drive engineered by Joe Montana in the final minutes of Super Bowl XXIII, and Kurt Warner threading a 73-yard pass to Isaac Bruce late in Super Bowl XXXIV—were made possible by the way the NFL has changed over the past four decades.

The passing game has benefited most, with the Super Bowl becoming a star vehicle for quarterbacks such as Terry Bradshaw, who threw nine touchdown passes in four Super Bowls, and Phil Simms, who completed 88 percent of his attempts in the Giants' Super Bowl XXI victory. The 49ers' duo of Montana (who was never intercepted in four Super Bowl starts) and Steve Young (who launched a record six touchdown passes in Super Bowl XXIX) would attest to that as well.

Some of the biggest changes took place in 1978 when defenders were restricted from making contact with receivers beyond five yards from the line of scrimmage, and pass blockers were allowed to extend their arms and open their hands.

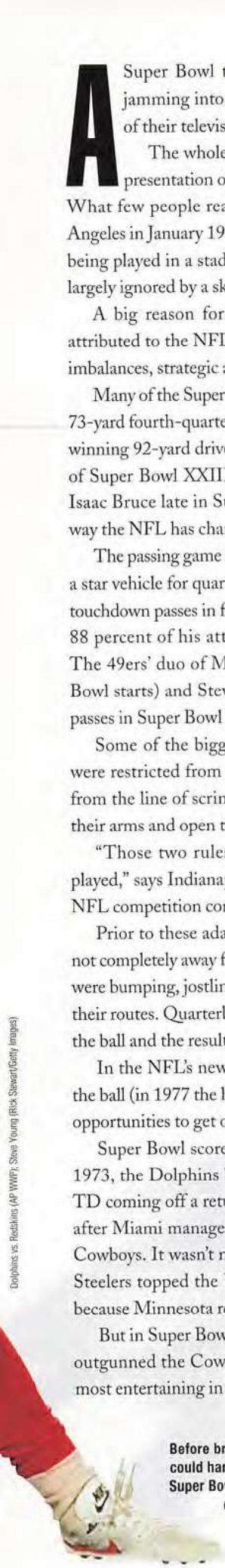
"Those two rules...completely changed the way the game was played," says Indianapolis Colts president Bill Polian, a member of the NFL competition committee for 15 years.

Prior to these adaptations, defenses were taking the air out of—if not completely away from—offenses. At all points of the field, defenders were bumping, jostling, and even knocking down receivers trying to run their routes. Quarterbacks subsequently would have no place to go with the ball and the result frequently would be a sack or turnover.

In the NFL's new world, the quarterback had more time to throw the ball (in 1977 the head slap also was outlawed) and his receivers more opportunities to get open.

Super Bowl scores reveal the trend. In Super Bowl VII, played in 1973, the Dolphins beat the Redskins, 14-7, with Washington's lone TD coming off a return of a blown field goal attempt. That was a year after Miami managed just a field goal in its Super Bowl VI loss to the Cowboys. It wasn't much different in Super Bowl IX either, when the Steelers topped the Vikings, 16-6, a game that wasn't a shutout only because Minnesota recovered a blocked punt for a touchdown.

But in Super Bowl XIII, shortly after the rules changed, the Steelers outgunned the Cowboys, 35-31, in a game still viewed as one of the most entertaining in Super Bowl history.



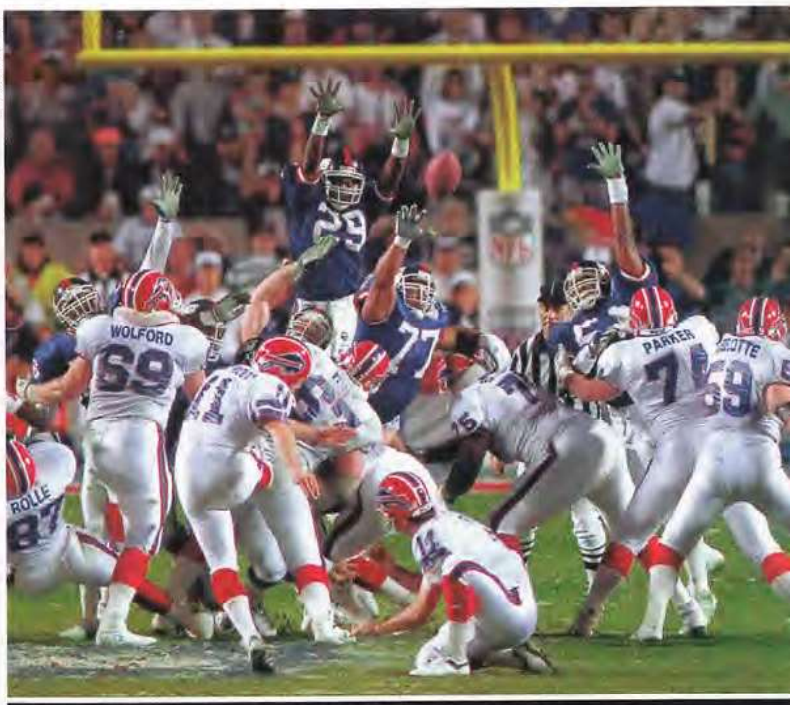
Dolphins vs. Redskins (AP WWP); Steve Young (Rick Stewart/Getty Images)

Before breaking up a pass, Miami's Lloyd Mumphord and Jake Scott could harass receivers—as they did to Washington's Charley Taylor in Super Bowl VII—in ways that would draw a flag in today's game. Rule changes helped Steve Young (inset) **pick apart the San Diego defense for six TD passes in Super Bowl XXIX.**

The pass game evolution became a revolution led by 49ers coach Bill Walsh and his West Coast offense. The beauty of Walsh's system is it enabled teams to employ a pass-heavy attack while keeping the quarterback upright. Short passes—with long runs after the catch—were the grapes from the West Coast vine. Since first showing up at the Super Bowl, it has left a monstrous footprint on the big game. All told, 17 Super Bowl teams have used the West Coast offense or a form of it, starting with San Francisco in its win over the Bengals in Super Bowl XVI.

The enhancement of the passing game is a clear example of one of the underlying themes whenever the NFL competition committee meets: touchdowns are a good thing. To that end, it made sense to discourage field goal attempts—and open up passing routes near the end of the field—which the committee did in 1974 by moving the goal posts back 10 yards, from the goal line to just beyond the end zone.

Phil Sandlin/AP WWP



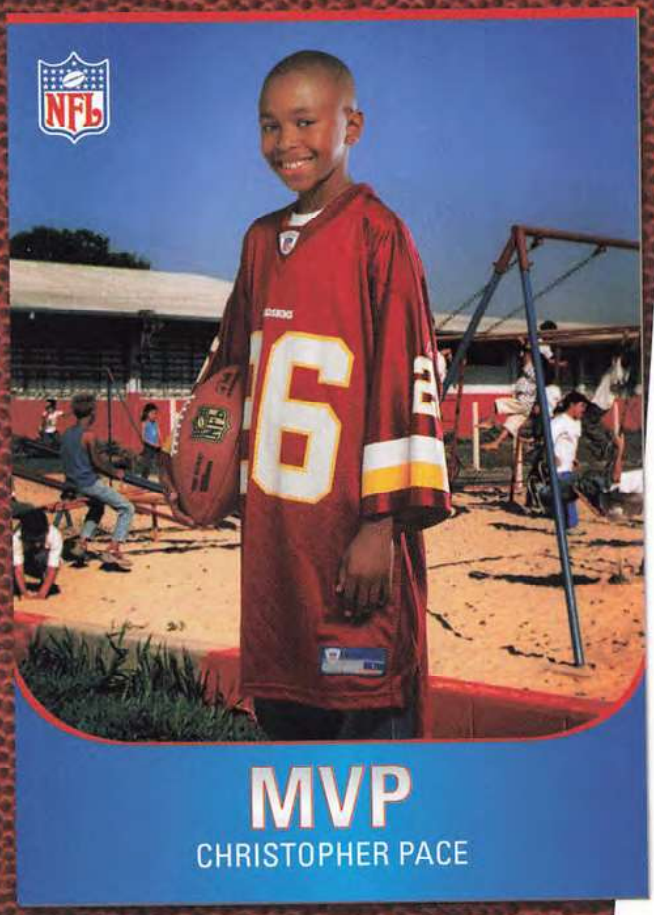
If the NFL hadn't moved goalposts to the back of the end zone, Scott Norwood's field goal attempt at the end of Super Bowl XXV may not have sailed wide right.

Without that change, the phrase "wide right" might not have the same connotation to Super Bowl fans—specifically those of the New York Giants and Buffalo Bills. For that is the well-worn description of Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal attempt in the waning seconds of Super Bowl XXV. His miss enabled the Giants to hang on for a 20-19 victory and their second title in five years. If it had been a 37-yard kick, chances are the Bills would have won the game...and never started their ignominious streak of losing four straight Super Bowls.

Another change that affected kicking was put in place in 1994, when teams were permitted the option of trying a traditional point-after-touchdown or "going for two" by running or passing the ball. Its adoption came after years of lobbying from late Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt and has added another level of strategy to NFL contests.

"Rather than have a kicking extra point with a success rate of 99.9 percent, this put some excitement in the game," says former Colts and Dolphins head coach Don Shula, who initially opposed the change.

If the Panthers had executed on a pair of two-point conversions, they might have emerged as champions of Super Bowl XXXVIII. Trailing the



CHRISTOPHER PACE - REDSKINS FAN

MVP

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COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	RM	AA	A	PU
03	REDSKINS	00	00	00	00
04	REDSKINS	01	00	00	00
05	REDSKINS	01	04	20	05
06	REDSKINS	02	08	02	30
07	REDSKINS	04	13	02	231
FAN CAREER		08	25	24	266

4'4" • WT: 72 | POSITION: 2ND GRADER
DOB: 11-04-99, WASHINGTON, DC | HOME: JACKSONVILLE, FL

RM - ROLE MODELS, AA - AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES, A - AUTOGRAPHS, PU - PULL UPS

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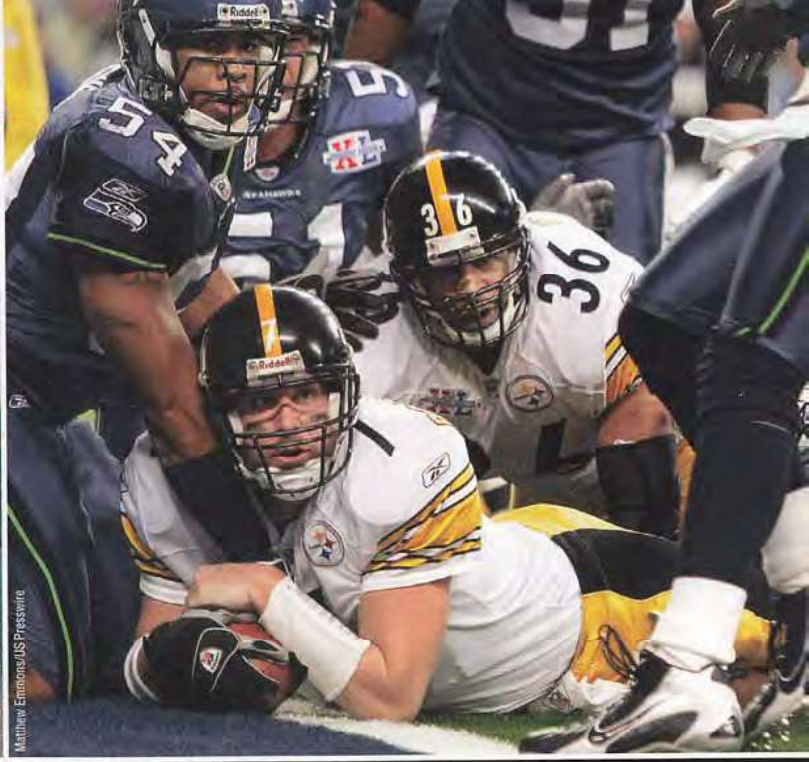
NFL Charities is committed to helping kids lead active, healthy lives. In every Super Bowl host city, the NFL builds a Youth Education Town (YET) that provides local kids after-school opportunities. By donating fitness training systems to the YETs, NFL Charities leaves a legacy of fitness education. Check out **jointheteam.com** to learn more.

Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

The advent of free agency brought Hall of Fame defensive end Reggie White to Green Bay and paved the way for the Packers to capture Super Bowl XXXI.



Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

Instant replay officials upheld Ben Roethlisberger's controversial touchdown in Super Bowl XL, a play that was critical to the Steelers' 21-10 triumph over Seattle.

Patriots, 21-10, they rallied with three late touchdowns to knot the game at 29-29. They would have held as much as a four-point lead if they had made both their two-point attempts, but Jake Delhomme misfired on passes to Muhsin Muhammad and Kevin Dyson. The Patriots, meanwhile, clicked on a two-point attempt of their own: a Kevin Faulk run that pushed their lead to 29-22 with 2:51 remaining. In the end, New England won the game when Adam Vinatieri hit a 41-yard field goal with four seconds to play.

Whenever rule changes are discussed, the competition committee weighs the potential for controversy in the Super Bowl before making its final recommendation.

"The Super Bowl is always in the back of our minds," says Falcons president Rich McKay, the committee's co-chair since 1998 and the Buccaneers' general manager when they won Super Bowl XXXVII. "We don't want a hole in the rules to be exploited on the biggest stage."

Perhaps the most debated rule change has been instant replay. As a member of the competition committee, Seattle coach Mike Holmgren championed its implementation, even though it ended up not helping his Seahawks in Super Bowl XL. Officials had ruled that Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger crossed the goal line on a 1-yard plunge just before halftime. Many who saw the play live thought Roethlisberger never reached the end zone, so Holmgren challenged the ruling. But after reviewing the play from several angles, referee Bill Leavy upheld the call on the field. The Steelers went on to win, 21-10.

"I'll go to my grave thinking Roethlisberger didn't make it in," says Holmgren. "But the officials on the field and in the replay booth handled it the way they're supposed to. If they had ruled on the field that he didn't score, that's the way it would have held up after replay, too."

Yet Holmgren also has benefited from the way the game has changed. He might never have taken Green Bay to Super Bowl XXXI if the NFL had not adopted free agency in 1993, a move that allowed the Packers to ink Hall of Fame defensive end Reggie White. McKay still calls it "the most important free agent signing ever."

And Holmgren might not have held the Lombardi Trophy following that game, except that NFL rosters had expanded to 45 players (from 40) in 1978. Larger rosters paved the way for specialists, Desmond Howard notable among them. Howard amassed 244 return yards, including a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown, and then walked off with the Super Bowl's MVP award in Green Bay's 35-21 win over the Patriots.

"There is a good chance with only 40 men, Desmond wouldn't have been on the team," Holmgren admits.

Roster expansion also made situational substitution possible and has encouraged four-receiver packages, designated pass rushers, and nickel and dime defenses, among other innovations. In unique ways, all have made for a superior product on the field.

And as athletes have become bigger, stronger, and faster, they have become more capable of executing complex game plans—thanks mostly to year-round dedication.

"The offseason program is the biggest change in football," Shula says. "It used to be a player would finish the season, get a job, and then work out for a couple of weeks before camp opened. Now, they take a month off and then they are with the team five days a week for most of the offseason, including practicing on the field.

"It has helped make the game as sophisticated as it is right now," adds the two-time Super Bowl-winning coach. "You can do so much more because you have more time."

Looking ahead, the NFL promises to become more sophisticated with technology and innovation playing a bigger role in America's biggest game. It may only be a matter of time before the world is talking about computer chips in shoulder pads and laser beams on goal lines the day after the Super Bowl.

One thing is certain: They will be talking. And the NFL will continue doing everything it can to make certain that never changes.

Chicago Tribune *writer Dan Pompei has been covering the NFL for more than 20 years. He is a contributor to ESPN's First Take and to MSNBC.com.*

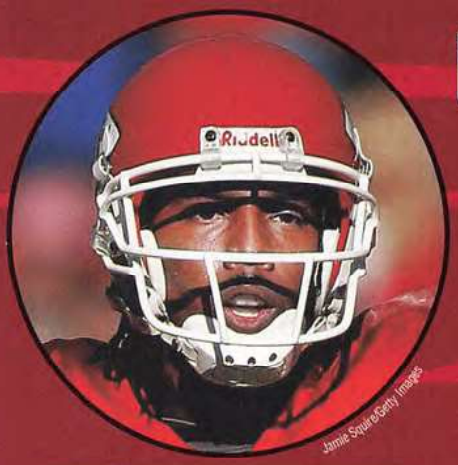
ROOKIE SALUTE

The Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week and Rookie of the Year programs have completed a sixth successful year. A strong and balanced rookie class was evident with three dozen different players being nominated for Rookie of the Week and 10 players capturing Rookie of the Week honors at least once during the season. More than one million fans then voted at www.nfl.com to determine the 2007 Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Year.

The winner, announced Thursday, Jan. 31, was chosen from a field of five players who were the top vote-getters during the Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week program. The 2007 Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Year joins previous recipients Vince Young, Carnell Williams, Ben Roethlisberger, Jeremy Shockey, and Domanick Davis in the hallowed halls of Rookie fame. The NFL and Diet Pepsi congratulate a great rookie class.

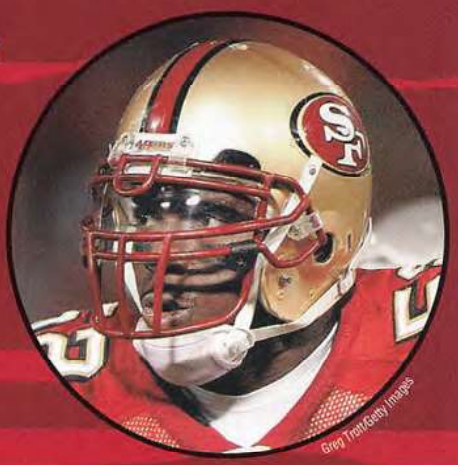
NFL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR '07 diet PEPSI

2007 DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

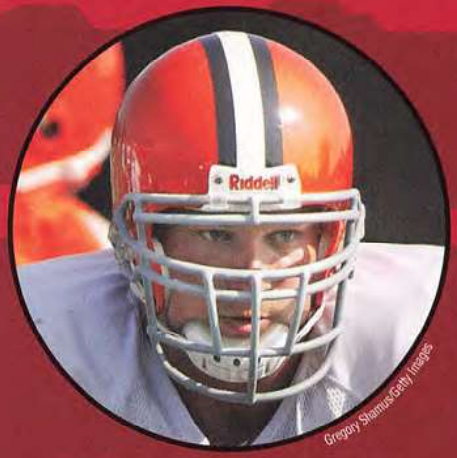


Jamie Squire/Getty Images

Dwayne Bowe
Wide Receiver, Chiefs


Greg Trott/Getty Images

Patrick Willis
Linebacker, 49ers



Gregory Shamus/Getty Images

Joe Thomas
Offensive Tackle, Browns

Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

Adrian Peterson
Running Back, Vikings

Rick Stewart/Getty Images

Marshawn Lynch
Running Back, Bills

2007 DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE OF THE WEEK WINNERS

Each week during the 2007 season, fans logged on to www.nfl.com to vote for the Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week. Here are this year's winners:

Week 1:	**Patrick Willis**	Week 7:	**Marshawn Lynch**	Week 13:	**Trent Edwards**
Week 2:	**Patrick Willis**	Week 8:	**James Jones**	Week 14:	**Trent Edwards**
Week 3:	**Dwayne Bowe**	Week 9:	**Adrian Peterson**	Week 15:	**Mason Crosby**
Week 4:	**Dwayne Bowe**	Week 10:	**Marshawn Lynch**	Week 16:	**Patrick Willis**
Week 5:	**Nick Folk**	Week 11:	**Ted Ginn Jr.**	Week 17:	**Brandon Jackson**
Week 6:	**Adrian Peterson**	Week 12:	**Patrick Willis**		

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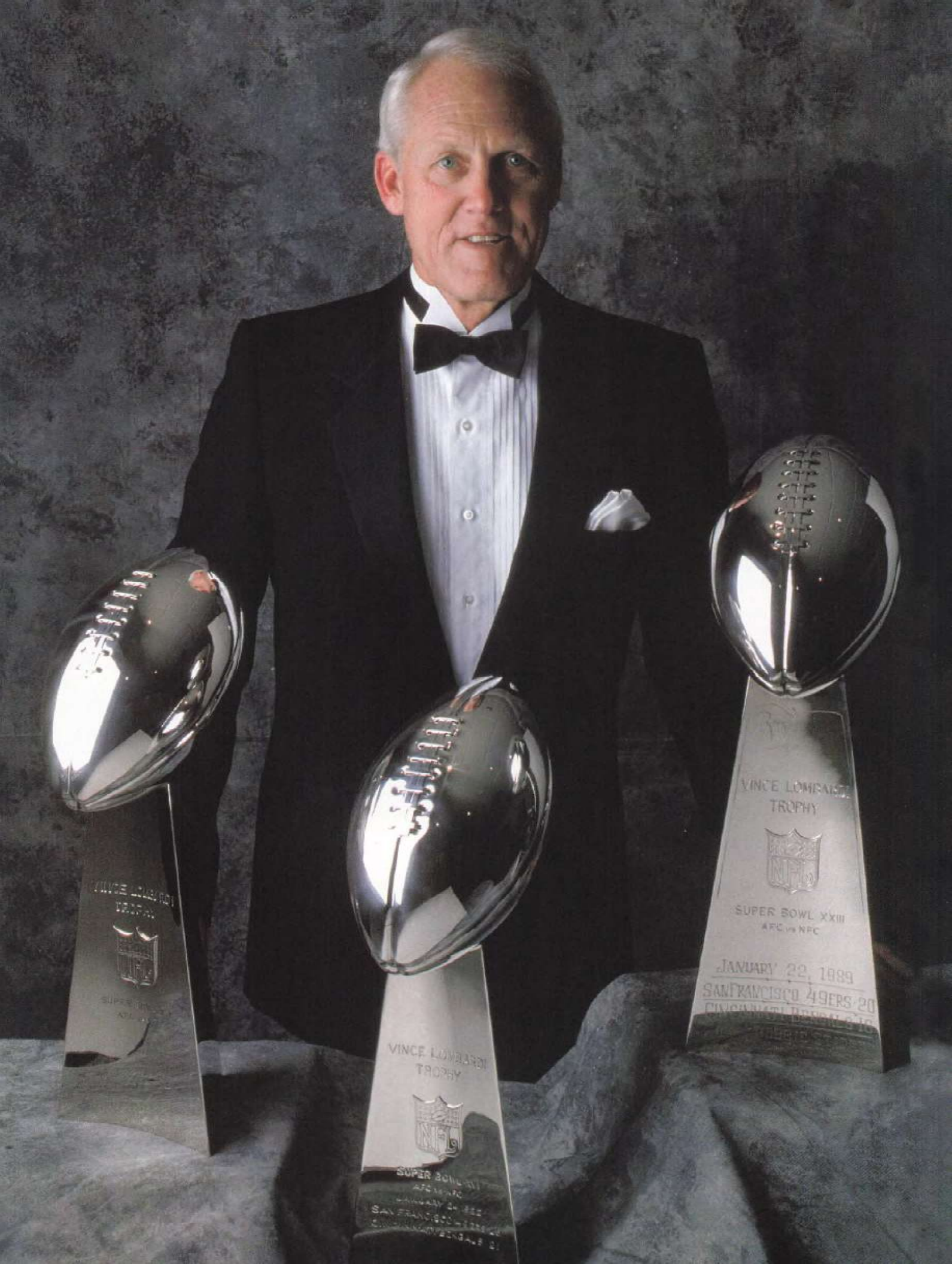

VINCE LOMBARDI
TROPHY
SUPER BOWL XXIII
AFC vs NFC
JANUARY 22, 1989
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS 20
VINCE LOMBARDI
TROPHY

Recalling A Coaching Legend

by Glenn Dickey

A defining measure of a coach is how his teams fare in the biggest games, and by that standard—and many others—Bill Walsh belongs among the best.

Walsh, considered by many to be the game's most innovative and influential offensive mind, lost his fight with leukemia last July at age 75. With his passing, football lost a giant. It was a reputation he cemented two decades ago when, as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers, three of his teams reached the Super Bowl. All three won. More impressive, each victory highlighted a different coaching strength.

The first Super Bowl, in January 1982, showed a side of Walsh seldom mentioned in the press but one very real to his players.

"What I remember most about Bill is his sense of humor," said his star quarterback, Joe Montana, after a memorial service last August. "He was very sly."

Shortly after the 49ers shocked everyone by winning the NFC title—they had gone 2-14 and 6-10 the previous two seasons—the Touchdown Club of Washington, D.C., honored Walsh as its Coach of the Year. He left to accept the award before his team headed to Detroit for Super Bowl XVI, and when his players arrived at their hotel, they were greeted by a gray-haired bellman. It took them several minutes to realize it was actually their head coach.

That was all part of Walsh's plan to keep his players loose in the face of a media swarm that can be daunting for a team appearing in its first Super Bowl. He was at it again on game day when the 49ers team bus was delayed 45 minutes by the motorcade for Vice President George H. W. Bush. Walsh hid his own concern by grabbing the microphone at the head of the bus and joking about who was taking over for him in the dressing room.

The approach worked. His team jumped out quickly against the AFC champion Cincinnati Bengals and won the game, 26-21.

By 1984, Walsh's organizational acumen was widely recognized. Working as the 49ers' general manager in addition to being the coach, he put together what many observers believe to be the best of the franchise's five Super Bowl champions. San Francisco fielded an excellent defense—its 227 points allowed were the fewest in the league—and the offense boasted 1,000-yard rushers Wendell Tyler and Roger Craig to augment Montana's precision passing.

Because Miami quarterback Dan Marino had set an NFL record that season with 48 touchdown passes, experts surmised that Super Bowl XIX would be an offensive shootout. They were only half right.

The Dolphins thought they could neutralize the 49ers' situational defenses by going no-huddle, but Walsh's defensive coordinator (and eventual successor), George Seifert, smartly responded by keeping his best pass-rushing linemen in the game. Meanwhile, Walsh noticed that Miami's linebackers turned their backs to the line of scrimmage when defending the pass, so he instructed Montana to run whenever he saw an opening. With that green light, Montana—in addition to throwing for 331 yards—rushed for 59 yards and collected his second Super Bowl MVP award as the 49ers cruised to a 38-16 victory.

Walsh's third Super Bowl, in January 1989, was accompanied by speculation he would soon retire, a distraction that nearly cost his team the game. With just 3:20 to play, the 49ers trailed the underdog Bengals, 16-13, and were backed up to their own 8-yard line.

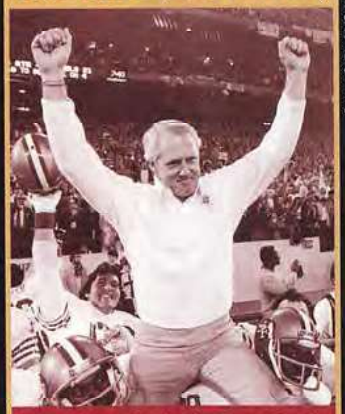
Yet Walsh-led teams excelled in pressure situations like this because of his emphasis on "playing the same way you practiced during the week." Montana methodically moved the 49ers down the field, setting up a second-and-two on the Bengals 10 with 39 seconds left. Walsh called a pass play to Craig—except that the running back lined up on the wrong side of the formation. Without skipping a beat, Montana adjusted at the line of scrimmage and instead threaded a pass to an open John Taylor for the winning touchdown.

Walsh did step aside after that game, becoming an analyst on NBC's NFL broadcasts before taking over Stanford's football program in 1992, yet his impact was evident in San Francisco's next two titles. The year after he left, the 49ers demolished the Broncos, 55-10, in Super Bowl XXIV. And in Super Bowl XXIX, they beat the Chargers, 49-26, with quarterback Steve Young and wide receiver Jerry Rice keying the rout. Walsh had traded for Young in 1987, when few believed the struggling QB would develop into a bona fide star. Two years earlier, Walsh moved up in the draft to select Rice, though his own scouting department doubted the Mississippi Valley State product was worth a first-round pick.

Even today, Walsh's influence can be seen on NFL sidelines. Six of his assistants became NFL head coaches—Mike Holmgren among them—and from those staffs 22 more have gone on to lead their own teams, including Super Bowl-winning coaches Mike Shanahan, Brian Billick, Jon Gruden, and Tony Dungy.

Football fans will never need to look far to find Bill Walsh's imprint on the game. And that's especially true on Super Bowl Sunday.

Bill Walsh (1931-2007)

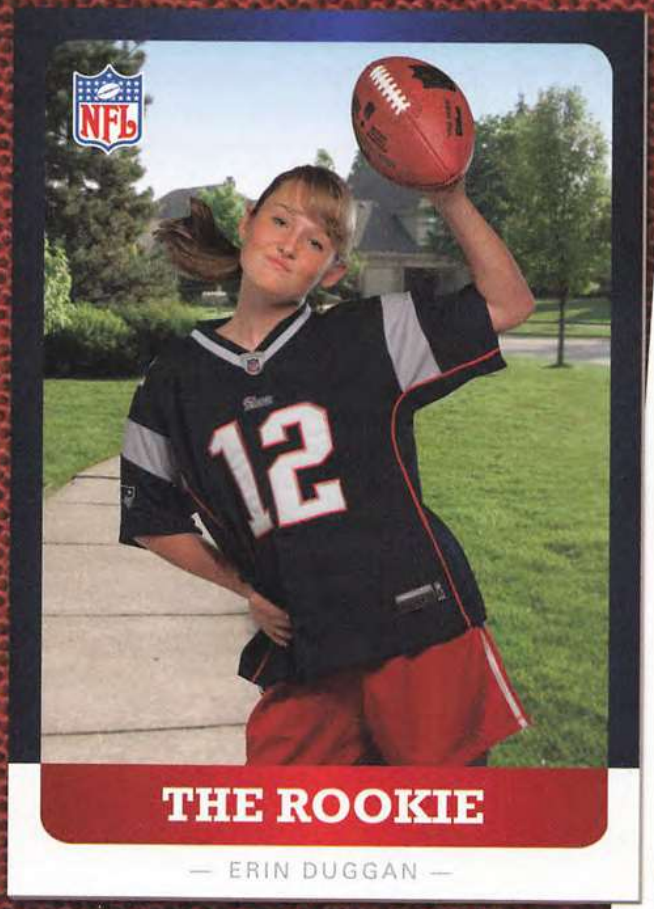


George Gojkovich/Getty Images

In all three trips to the Super Bowl, Bill Walsh's 49ers came out on top.

Michael Zagaris/Getty Images

Glenn Dickey co-authored the 1990 book, Building a Champion, *with Bill Walsh. He has covered pro football since 1967 and now writes for* The San Francisco Examiner, Pro Football Weekly *and GlennDickey.com.*



ERIN DUGGAN - PATRIOTS FAN

THE ROOKIE

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COMPLETE NFL FAN RECORD

YR	TEAM	HO	BT	SE	VE
03	PATRIOTS	13	00	236	00
04	PATRIOTS	26	00	254	00
05	PATRIOTS	64	03	67	13
06	PATRIOTS	97	06	17	104
07	PATRIOTS	176	13	23	307
FAN CAREER		376	22	597	424

5'5" • WT: 105 | POSITION: 7TH GRADER
DOB: 07-12-95, LITTLETON, NH | HOME: AMHERST, NH

HO - HOURS OUTSIDE, BT - BOYS TACKLED, SE - SWEETS EATEN, VE - VEGGIES EATEN

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NFL YET Centers are investing in the leaders of tomorrow.

Photos courtesy of NFL

NFL YOUTH EDUCATION ★ TOWN ★

Children need a safe place to study, receive support, play sports, and have fun. A Super Bowl Legacy Grant program was established in 1992 as part of the NFL's lasting commitment to positively impacting the youngsters who reside in at-risk neighborhoods in each Super Bowl host city. In partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs and a network of youth-serving organizations, the National Football League commits $1 million toward the Youth Education Town (YET) initiative each year, a total that is matched by local government and private donations.

Since 1993, 15 YETs have been dedicated in 12 cities across the country—Los Angeles, Atlanta, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Honolulu, Jacksonville, Miami, New Orleans, Phoenix, and two each in Houston, San Diego, and Tampa.

NFL YET centers vary in scope, but all offer tutoring, mentoring, life-skills and career training, computer labs, libraries, and access to athletic programs. In 2007, NFL Charities enhanced this initiative by committing to outfit each YET with an NFL customized, interactive fitness training system.

Photo courtesy of NFL

ARIZONA With Super Bowl XLII, the NFL is reinvesting in the existing Arizona YET previously funded by Super Bowl XXX with a grant to fund expansion and outreach programs. This 10,000 square foot facility is unique among its YET peers because it is a full-service charter school serving 1,000 students from elementary through high school as well as its surrounding community.

ATLANTA Super Bowls XXVIII and XXXIV brought the opening of the second NFL YET in 1994, a facility that spans over five acres and offers a 70-yard football field. This YET maintains its outstanding commitment to youth fitness and health services as the first to feature the NFL customized, interactive fitness training system among its many after-school support services. The Center serves approximately 2,000 children per year.

DETROIT Super Bowl XL brought the largest YET project undertaken to date with a stunning $6 million, 32,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility and adjoining athletic field. This YET is positioned next to Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions, and has served as a magnet in the revitalization of its surrounding community. The facility opened in May 2007 and is projected to serve 2,500 youth annually.

FORT LAUDERDALE Super Bowl XXXIII was held in Miami, allocating the state's second Legacy Grant to opening a YET in Ft. Lauderdale. It ranks among the area's premier centers for youth, focusing on character and leadership training, while also providing educational and career support services and a focus on the arts and recreation. In 2007, this YET incorporated an NFL Forever Young Multi-Media Arts Center.

HAWAII Through the NFL All-Star game—played in Honolulu since 1980—the NFL continues to strengthen its commitment to the people of Hawaii. As a result, a YET is being built in Oahu, a facility that will become the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified "green building" among the NFL's 15 YETs. The Hawaii YET, with a Forever Young Multi-Media Arts Center, will open in 2009.

HOUSTON Super Bowl XXXVIII generated record-breaking fundraising support, enough for the Host Committee and the NFL to commit to building two YET locations. Both opened their doors by autumn 2007 and are managed and operated by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston. They provide children ages 7 to 17 a safe place to learn and grow through their many quality-of-life programs.

JACKSONVILLE The YET in the Brentwood Park community of Jacksonville opened its doors in November 2007 as a lasting reminder of Super Bowl XXXIX. Among the features of the 22,400 square foot facility are a gymnasium, game room, arts & crafts, computer lab, learning center, athletic field, and teen center. Programs in the areas of character and leadership, education and career development, and arts, as well as fitness and sports recreation are off to a great start.

LOS ANGELES The charter Youth Education Town (YET) opened in Compton, California, in 1993 with a Legacy Grant from Super Bowl XXVII. The YET initiative began with this first gift of support to a community ravaged by racial tensions just one year earlier. The only YET without a local NFL team, this center operates a full range of family and youth development programs, including early childhood development, family literacy, educational support, recreation and sports facilities, and leadership classes serving as many as 1,500 youth and families each year.

MIAMI This YET opened following Super Bowl XXIX and operates uniquely under a private/public triumvirate of governance—Gwen Cherry Park Houses Communities-In-Schools, Boys & Girls Club of Miami, and Miami-Dade County Parks & Recreation Department. The center provides a safe place to study, participate in cultural experiences, interact with technology, and play.

NEW ORLEANS Super Bowl XXXVI prompted the opening of this YET in 2002. The site was entirely rebuilt by the New Orleans Saints organization and the NFL in September 2006 following its destruction by Hurricane Katrina. After reversing $1 million in damages, the 8,500 square foot facility reopened and is the third YET to house a Forever Young Multi-Media Arts Center. It also offers tutoring programs, library resources, a gymnasium, and sports programming for New Orleans' youth.

SAN DIEGO The city of San Diego boasts two YET locations which have partnered with the NFL since Super Bowl XXXII. These centers serve up exciting activities and opportunities for youth residing near each of their locations, specializing in comprehensive arts and cultural activities, including dance and theatre troupes, academic enrichment, leadership development, mentoring, and community service programs, as well as general recreation.

TAMPA Two YET centers opened as a result of Super Bowl XXXV. They operate as a public/private partnership with the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County. Located in East Tampa (Jackson Heights Center) and University Area (Mort Park Center), the facilities provide resources previously unavailable to more than 500 children and families in these communities. The Jackson Heights center also houses a spectacular football field. These YETs offer mentoring and personal development, education assistance, life skills training, and recreation activities.

First in Flight

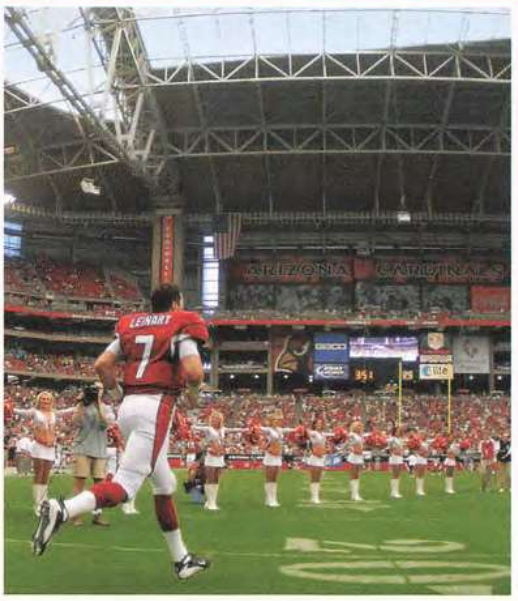
WITH ROOTS THAT DATE BACK MORE THAN A CENTURY, THE CARDINALS ARE THE NFL'S OLDEST FRANCHISE.

by Darren Urban

It was the color of their jerseys, not the bird, that first gave the Cardinals their nickname. And for a franchise that lays claim to such a colorful history—even if it hasn't been matched by consistent on-field success—the moniker remains a perfect fit.

The story goes that the team, founded in 1898, received a set of hand-me-down uniforms from the University of Chicago football team. The jerseys were originally maroon, but had become so faded that team owner Chris O'Brien declared they looked "Cardinal red."

The name stuck. And so have the Cardinals...longer than any other pro football team.



Mark J. Rebilas/US Presswire

In fact, the Cardinals and the Chicago Bears are the only two charter franchises that remain from the original National Football League. Yet, unlike the Bears, the Cardinals were born in Illinois, at one point being known as the Racine Cardinals because their home games were played on Chicago's Racine Avenue.

Also unlike the Bears, the Cardinals have had a few homes in their 110 years. First, the franchise bounced around the Chicago area, later moved to St. Louis, and then took flight to Arizona, where they've been called the Phoenix Cardinals and, since 1994, the Arizona Cardinals.

Sixty years removed from their last NFL championship and 20 seasons after migrating to the Valley of the Sun, the team's current nest—the state-of-the-art University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale—is home to Super Bowl XLII. Until they play in the NFL's big game, hosting it may rate as the fanciest feather in the Cardinals' well-worn cap.

MODEST BEGINNINGS

Originally known as the Morgan Athletic Association, two years later—after their "new" uniforms were obtained—the team changed its name to the Cardinals Athletic and Social Club. Upon moving their games to Racine and 61st Street in Chicago, they became the Racine

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

Cardinals, which occasionally caused confusion for out-of-towners (as well as a few wayward historians) who thought the team was based in Racine, Wisconsin.

That remained their name when O'Brien entered them into the original NFL in 1920. And they were Chicago's only team, since the Bears' ancestor—the Decatur Staleys—didn't move to the Windy City until one year later. O'Brien knew allowing a competitor into town might hurt his financial standing, but his attitude—which he repeated to family members over the years—was that he let the Bears come to Chicago "for the sport, not for the money."

The Bears, of course, became an NFL mainstay and the two teams have forged the league's oldest rivalry, meeting for the first time on Nov. 28, 1920. The Cardinals won that inaugural contest, 7-6, at Chicago's Normal Park, though the Bears have since built a sizeable 55-26-6 series lead.

Success came quickly for the Cardinals, who finished .500 or better in each of their first six seasons, culminating with the NFL title in 1925 on the strength of an 11-2-1 campaign. But money problems forced the team to sell star running back and kicker Paddy Driscoll to the Bears, a move that not only made the cross-town team more powerful, it underscored the Cardinals' financial woes.

By 1929, as the country began sinking into the Great Depression, O'Brien sold the team to Dr. David Jones. Four years later, Charles Bidwill—who had been an investor with the Bears—gave up his stake in that team to purchase the Cardinals.

A CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1947

Bidwill steadily built the Cardinals for a title run in the 1940s. He spent an unheard-of sum of $100,000 on collegiate running back Charley Trippi and padded the roster with quarterback Paul Christman and running backs Pat Harder, Marshall Goldberg, and Elmer Angsman. This "Million Dollar Backfield" became the engine that drove the franchise to the title, though Bidwill didn't live to see it. He passed away in April 1947, eight months before the Cardinals defeated the Eagles for the championship.

The coach was Jim Conzelman, who had left in 1942 but returned for the title run. His club beat the defending league champion Bears twice, finished 9-3, and won the Western Division for the right to play in the title game. On an icy day in Chicago, the Cards laced up their sneakers to better handle the frigid Comiskey Park turf and the result was four long touchdown plays—two 70-yard runs by Angsman, a 75-yard punt return by Trippi, and a 44-yard dash by Trippi. Goldberg then picked off Philadelphia's Tommy Thompson to clinch the 28-21 win.

The Cards had a better record in 1948, romping through the league with an 11-1 mark, but their nine-game winning streak was snapped in a snowy championship game rematch against the Eagles at Shibe Park.

The Cardinals battle the Bears at Wrigley Field during the 1925 season, a game that ended in a 0-0 tie. (Inset) **Quarterback Matt Leinart takes the field at University of Phoenix Stadium for a preseason game against the Texans in August 2007.**

Photos courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

(Top) **Paddy Driscoll was one of the Cardinals' early stars.** (Bottom) **Charles Bidwill purchased the team in 1933.**

Their record dipped to 6-5-1 in 1949, and they managed just one winning season throughout the 1950s. Unable to match the Bears' ongoing success, the Cardinals ceded the city to their long-time rivals and packed up for St. Louis in 1960.

THE CARDIAC CARDS

Upon arriving in Missouri, it took some time to assemble a playoff team, the closest call coming in 1964 when a 9-3-2 mark left the Cardinals a half-game behind Cleveland in the Eastern Conference. But after Don Coryell arrived as coach in 1973, the Cardinals became one of the NFL's most entertaining entries. In Coryell's second season, the Cards won their first seven games, finished 10-4, and captured the NFC East before falling at Minnesota in the playoffs.

The team then reached its apex in 1975 as the explosive "Cardiac Cards." Nine players, including seven on offense—quarterback Jim Hart, receiver Mel Gray, running back/return man Terry Metcalf, fullback Jim Otis, and linemen Conrad Dobler, Tom Banks, and Dan Dierdorf—made the Pro Bowl. Otis led the NFL with 1,076 rushing yards, helping the team to an 11-3 mark and a second straight division crown.

"We thought we were good enough to win the whole thing," Gray said years later.

The Cards averaged better than 25 points per game, thanks in good part to Metcalf, who set a league record at the time with 2,462 all-purpose yards. More importantly, their stellar offensive line allowed a mere eight sacks during the regular season. However, St. Louis was again forced to the road for the playoffs, facing a Los Angeles Rams team that had held opponents to fewer than 10 ppg. The Cardinals more than doubled that total, but still came out on the short end of a 35-23 decision.

Despite going 10-4 in 1976, the Cardinals missed out on the postseason. They remained out of the playoffs—except for 1982's strike-induced tournament—until their storybook march in 1998.

MOVING TO THE DESERT

In the 1980s, the Cardinals were looking for a new stadium in St. Louis. Yet when it became clear this wasn't going to happen, the team instead began to look for a new city. The growing metropolis of Phoenix and the surrounding region became the logical destination.

At the time, Phoenix had little presence on the pro sports scene. While the NBA's Suns had been around since 1968, Arizona State provided the area's football and baseball entertainment. The Cardinals' arrival in 1988 seemed to elevate the Valley's stature. Sure enough, within a decade, both the NHL and Major League Baseball placed franchises in the state.

Ron Wolfley, the Pro Bowl special teamer who came with the Cards from St. Louis, put it succinctly: "We were rock stars." He remembers eating dinner by the huge bay window in the front of his house and watching fans drive slowly by, waving to him from the street.

Pro Football Hall of Fame

Jonathan Kirn/AP WWP

(Right) **Charley Trippi, Marshall Goldberg, and Elmer Angsman—part of the Cardinals' famed "Million Dollar Backfield"—show off their 1947 NFL championship rings. Trippi** (above) **scored twice in the title game.**

The newly relocated Cardinals lost their season opener in Cincinnati and then fell in their first game at Sun Devil Stadium, a 17-14 setback to Dallas on *Monday Night Football*. But behind sparkplug quarterback Neil Lomax, the team reeled off seven wins in its next nine games. Included in that run was a 41-point outburst against the Rams and a stunning 24-23 home victory over the eventual Super Bowl XXIII champion San Francisco 49ers, a game the Cards had trailed, 23-0.

The fan base, already excited to have an NFL team, became even more energized. Lomax, however, hurt his hip—an injury that derailed the Cardinals' season and eventually ended his career. They dropped their last five games to finish 7-9.

Over the next five years, the team's high-water mark for wins remained seven. In 1994, the franchise made an effort to embrace the entire state by changing its name from the Phoenix Cardinals to the Arizona Cardinals.

THE RIDE IN 1998

The Cardinals used their second-round draft pick in 1997 to get both a quarterback of the future and a hometown hero. Jake Plummer had just spent four years at Arizona State, playing on the same field as the Cardinals, where he won over the hearts of Valley fans.

He soon began to work his magic for the state's pro team and was the main reason for optimism in 1998. With Plummer plugging away and a young defensive line of Simeon Rice, Eric Swann, Mark Smith, and rookie Andre Wadsworth, the team began to revive its "Cardiac Cards" image of the 1970s.

Possessing a 6-7 record and needing three straight wins to reach the postseason, Plummer and the Cardinals nipped Philadelphia, 20-17, in overtime on a Chris Jacke field goal. Next was a 19-17 victory over New Orleans, again earned on a late Jacke field goal. Then, in the season finale, he nailed a 52-yard kick to beat the Chargers, 16-13, and send the Cards to the playoffs for the first time since arriving in the Grand Canyon State. Said owner Bill Bidwill at the time, "I had to pinch myself to make sure it really happened."

Having lost to the Cowboys twice during the regular season and finishing a game behind them in the NFC East, the Cardinals traveled to Dallas for the wild card playoff game. No one seemed to care that they had dropped nine straight at Texas Stadium. Momentum was clearly on Arizona's side. Plummer threw a pair of touchdown passes, the defense stiffened, and the Cards headed home with a 20-7 victory. It was their first playoff triumph in 51 years.

Although they lost to a heavily favored Minnesota squad, 41-21, the following week, the season remains the Cardinals' best since moving to the desert.

Michael Zagaris/Getty Images

In 1975, Terry Metcalf was part of the "Cardiac Cards" team that captured the NFC East title.

STARS THROUGH THE YEARS

Paddy Driscoll may have been the franchise's first big star, but Ernie Nevers was the first to leave a long-lasting imprint on the NFL record book. In 1929, Nevers scored every Cardinals point in a 40-6 Thanksgiving Day win over the Bears. Nearly eight decades later, that total remains a league single-game record.

Ollie Matson and Dick "Night Train" Lane were Cardinals teammates in the 1950s. Matson, a six-time Pro Bowler, was a threat running, receiving, and returning kicks. Lane averaged more than 20 yards per return on his 30 career interceptions with the Cardinals.

In the 1960s, Larry Wilson popularized the safety blitz, and the hard-hitting defensive back is legendary for once making an interception with two broken hands and both hands in casts. Last August, Roger Wehrli joined 15 others with ties to the franchise in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, a reward for the 40 interceptions he had in a 14-year career that ended in 1982.

Tight end Jackie Smith was the Cardinals' go-to receiver in the 1970s and finished his career with 480 catches and 40 touchdowns. After the move to Arizona, cornerback Aeneas Williams evolved into

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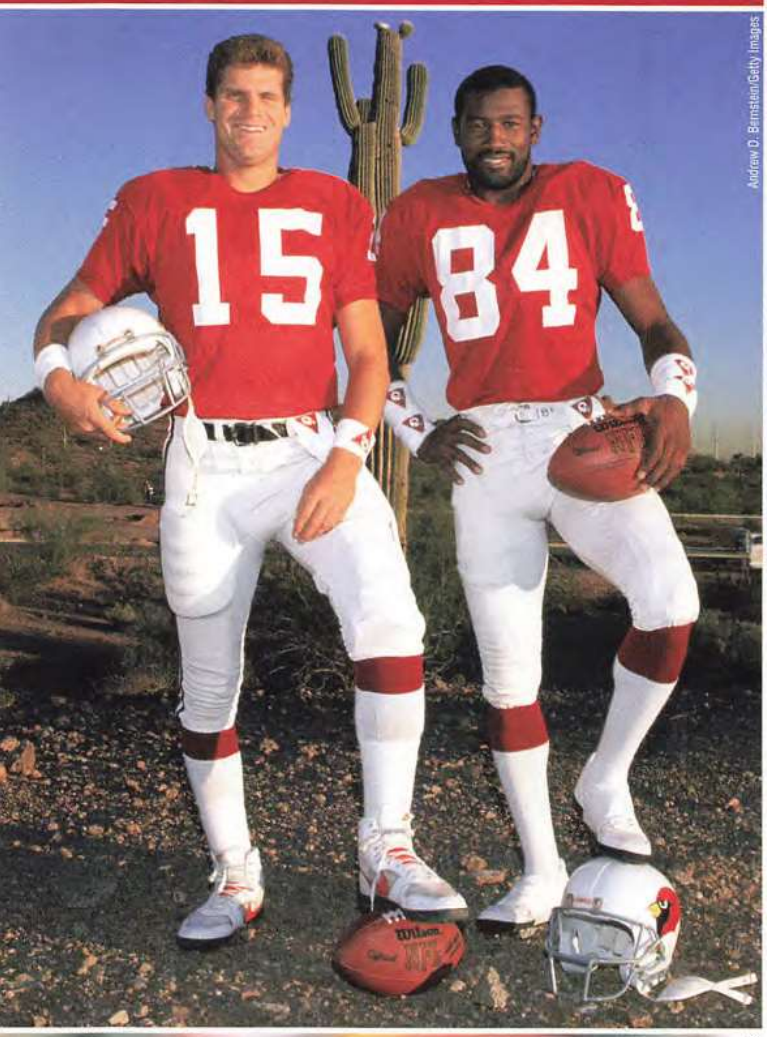
(Clockwise from right): **Wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald is among the many young standouts on the current-day Cardinals. Jake Plummer sparked the 1998 Cardinals to an improbable run that culminated with the team's first playoff victory in 51 years. Quarterback Neil Lomax and wide receiver J.T. Smith pose for a photo that marked the team's 1988 arrival in Arizona.**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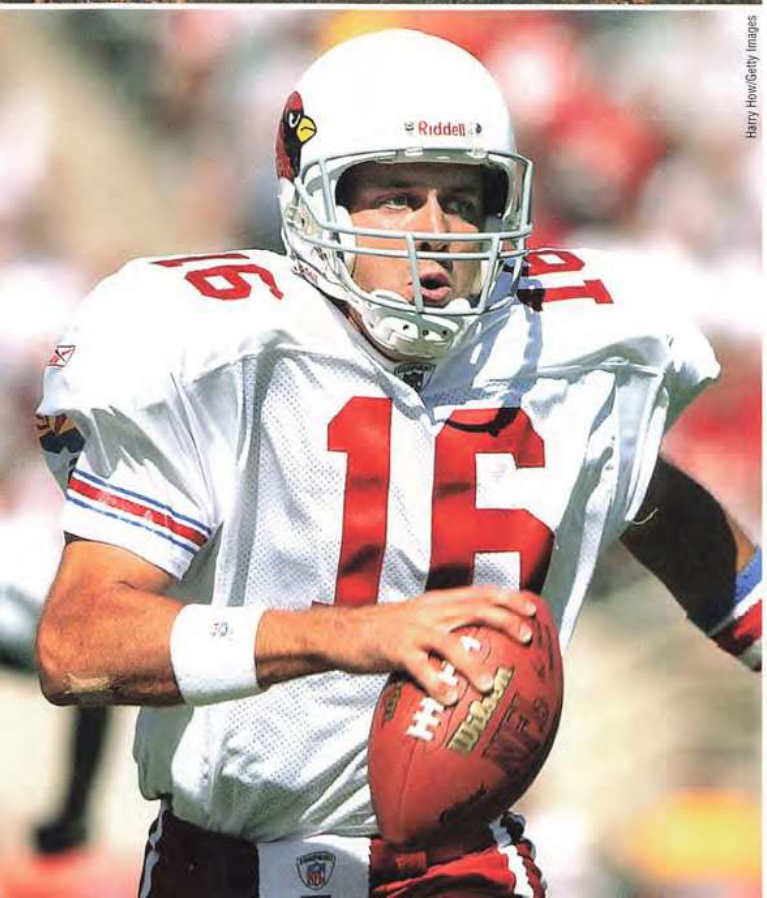
Harry How/Getty Images

one of the game's best pass defenders, while fullback Larry Centers was the team's heart and soul for a good part of the 1990s.

The Cardinals have had their share of military heroes. Not only did the late Pat Tillman famously give up his NFL career to join the Army, one-time receiver Motts Tonelli survived the Bataan Death March and came back to make one more stirring appearance for the team, while Marshall Goldberg missed two seasons to serve in World War II.

RECENT VINTAGE

In 2000, the combined efforts of team, city, and state officials created support for a public vote that helped fund what is now University of Phoenix Stadium. With Super Bowl XLII's arrival, the facility has already welcomed football's two biggest games—last January, the BCS title game between Florida and Ohio State was played at the stadium.

The Cardinals carved out another piece of NFL history in 2005 when they gave up a home game to "host" the 49ers in Mexico City, marking the NFL's first regular-season foray outside the United States. A crowd of 103,467 filled Azteca Stadium to see Arizona win, 31-14.

The team's current incarnation includes a new coach—Pittsburgh Steelers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt was hired to that post in January 2007—and star power. Quarterback Matt Leinart's availability as the No. 10 overall pick in the 2006 draft was called a "gift from heaven" by then-head coach Dennis Green. Running back Edgerrin James, one of the NFL's all-time best, was signed as a free agent that same season. And the team has drafted deftly, selecting Pro Bowl receivers Anquan Boldin and Larry Fitzgerald in recent years, and boasts a solid defense that includes Pro Bowl safety Adrian Wilson.

"We're not trying to change the world," Whisenhunt said after his hiring. "We understand it isn't always going to be easy or smooth. In this business, you're judged on wins and losses. We just want to be consistent."

And along with being colorful, consistency would become a welcome part of the Cardinals' long history.

Darren Urban covered the Cardinals for eight seasons for the East Valley *(Ariz.)* Tribune *and now covers the team for azcardinals.com.*

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04	GIANTS	00	00	137K	00
05	GIANTS	01	03	152K	01
06	GIANTS	03	02	184K	00
07	GIANTS	00	00	203K	00
FAN CAREER		07	07	767K	03

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THE REAL DEAL

THESE 16 CARDS HAVE EARNED THEIR PLACE IN THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME.

Charles W. Bidwill, Sr.

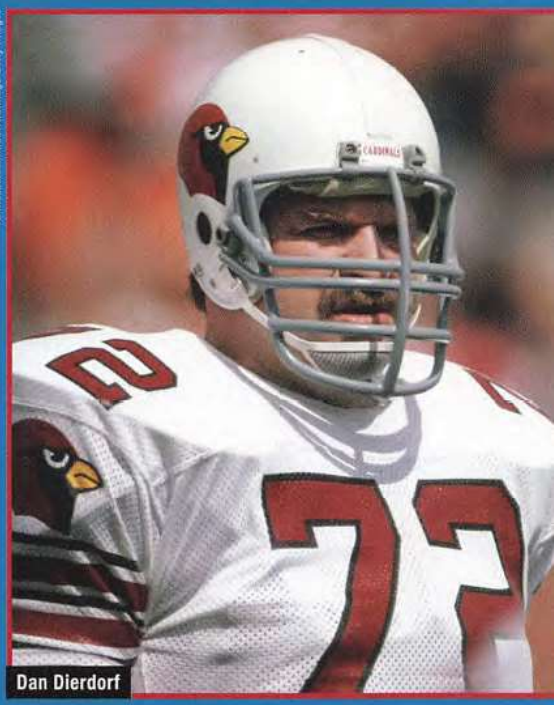
Inducted in 1967
Owner / Administrator
1933-47 Chicago Cardinals

Charles Bidwill bought the Cardinals in 1933 and owned the team until his passing in 1947. One of the game's early pioneers and enthusiasts, he kept the franchise—and perhaps the entire NFL—alive during difficult times while building a contender. His crowning achievement was signing University of Georgia All-American Charley Trippi to a $100,000 contract that kept him away from the rival All-America Football Conference. It was the final piece to the team's "Million Dollar Backfield" that included Paul Christman, Pat Harder, and Marshall Goldberg. The Cardinals won the NFL championship in 1947 and reached the title game the following year. Sadly, Bidwill's death prevented him from enjoying this success.

Guy Chamberlin

Inducted in 1965
Offensive & Defensive End / Head Coach
1927-28 Chicago Cardinals

A two-time All-American at Nebraska, Guy Chamberlin entered pro football in 1919 with the pre-NFL Canton Bulldogs. A year later, George Halas recruited him to the Decatur Staleys, but in 1922 Chamberlin returned to Canton as player-coach and led the Bulldogs to back-to-back NFL titles. When the team was sold and many of its players added to the Cleveland franchise, Chamberlin went along and coached that team to the league title as well. He won a fourth crown in 1926 with the Frankford Yellowjackets. He then became player-coach for the Cardinals in 1927 before turning exclusively to coaching the following fall. Chamberlin's 58-16-7 (.759) record as a head coach is still among the best in history.



Al Messerschmidt/WireImage/Getty Images

Dan Dierdorf

AP WWP

(Left to right) **Charles W. Bidwill, Sr., Charley Trippi, and Jimmy Conzelman**

Jimmy Conzelman

Inducted in 1964
Quarterback / Coach / Owner
1940-42, 1946-48 Chicago Cardinals

A member of the Great Lakes Navy team that won the 1919 Rose Bowl, Jimmy Conzelman was recruited by teammate George Halas to join the Decatur Staleys in what became the NFL. He moved on to become a player-coach with the Rock Island Independents and the Milwaukee Badgers, and owned an NFL franchise in Detroit in 1925. He returned that team to the league to join the Providence Steam Roller as player-coach and helped them to the 1928 NFL title with an 8-1-2 mark. After being out of football for 10 years, Conzelman was lured back to coach the Cardinals. In his second stint there, he guided them to back-to-back title game appearances against the Eagles and won the 1947 league championship.

Dan Dierdorf

Inducted in 1996
Tackle
1971-83 St. Louis Cardinals

Dan Dierdorf seemed destined for stardom from the moment he joined the Cardinals in 1971. A consensus All-American at Michigan, he played both guard and tackle in his first two pro seasons before settling in as the team's right tackle. With his size, speed, discipline, and intelligence, he proved equally effective as a blocker on both running and passing plays. Dierdorf was the leader of a line that permitted the fewest sacks in the NFC for five straight years, and in 1975 the Cardinals set a then-record by allowing just eight sacks in 14 games. In 1982, he moved to center to help address a team need. Dierdorf was named All-Pro five times—from 1975 to 1978 and again in 1980, and was picked to play in six Pro Bowls.

John "Paddy" Driscoll

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

Earl "Curly" Lambeau

Inducted in 1963
Founder / Coach
1950-51 Chicago Cardinals

Earl "Curly" Lambeau founded the Green Bay Packers in 1919 and was the team's first playing star and its coach for 31 years. More than any other person, he is responsible for the existence of the Packers' unique small-town franchise. A talented halfback and the first pass-minded coach in the NFL, Lambeau led Green Bay to six titles, with consecutive championships in 1929, 1930, and 1931, and three more with the extraordinary Don Hutson as his wide receiver. Lambeau became head coach of the Cardinals in 1950 and 1951 and would later coach the Redskins. For many years, his 229 career wins ranked second only to George Halas.

Ollie Matson

Inducted in 1972
Halfback
1952, 1954-58 Chicago Cardinals

Ollie Matson enjoyed a brilliant pro football career despite constantly facing defenses that focused solely on stopping him. Signed by the Cardinals in 1952, Matson was first hailed as a fleet-footed ball carrier. Yet the Olympic medal-winner proved to be an all-around threat, catching 34 passes in 1954 and rushing for 924 yards in 1956, both personal standards. For his career, Matson gained 12,844 yards as a rusher, receiver, and return man. He scored 73 touchdowns, including nine on kick returns. During his 14 pro seasons, Matson earned first- or second-team All-NFL honors six times and was selected to play in six Pro Bowls.

John "Paddy" Driscoll

Inducted in 1965
Quarterback
1920-25 Chicago Cardinals

John "Paddy" Driscoll was among the NFL's first "franchise players." At just 5-11 and 160 pounds, he was not very big, but size didn't prevent him from excelling on both offense and defense, and he was particularly adept in punting and dropkicking. In two 1922 games against the Bears, he scored all the points on field goals as the Cardinals prevailed by scores of 6-0 and 9-0. Although Driscoll starred for the Cardinals' 1925 title team, the possibility he might defect to a new league in 1926 prompted his trade to the crosstown Bears, where he continued to single-handedly subdue opponents for the remainder of his career.

Dick "Night Train" Lane

Inducted in 1974
Cornerback
1954-59 Chicago Cardinals

Dick Lane was an Army veteran who made the NFL after getting a tryout with the Los Angeles Rams in 1952. Blessed with speed, agility, and outstanding reflexes—and with a fierce determination to excel—"Night Train" set an NFL record as a rookie by grabbing 14 interceptions. He was traded to the Cardinals in 1954 and had 10 pickoffs in his first year in Chicago. Named first- or second-team All-NFL every year from 1954-63 and selected to seven Pro Bowls, Lane finished his career with 68 interceptions, 30 that came while playing for the Cardinals. From 1960-65, Lane was a member of the Detroit Lions.

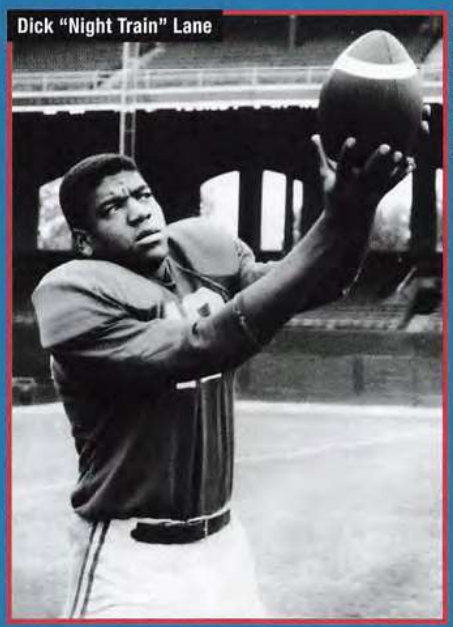
Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

Ollie Matson

Walt Kiesling

Inducted in 1966
Guard / Coach
1929-33 Chicago Cardinals

Walt Kiesling spent 34 years as a player and coach in the NFL. A two-way guard who was larger, stronger, and tougher than most of his opponents, he began his storied career with the Duluth Eskimos. As a member of the Cardinals in 1929, he helped Ernie Nevers reach the record books with power blocking that paved the way for Nevers to score 40 points in a win over the Bears. Kiesling, a three-time member of the all-league team, played for the Bears in 1934 when they went through the regular season undefeated and was part of the 1936 NFL champion Packers. His coaching career included two stints with Pittsburgh.



Dick "Night Train" Lane

NFL/ WireImage/Getty Images

Don Maynard

Inducted in 1987
Wide Receiver
1973 St. Louis Cardinals

The final step in Don Maynard's 16-year pro career brought him to St. Louis. By then, he was hailed as one of the top receivers in pro football history. Maynard spent 1958 with the N.Y. Giants and played with Hamilton of the CFL the following year. He then became the first player signed by the AFL's New York Titans (Jets). In 1965, upon being paired with QB Joe Namath, Maynard caught a career-high 14 touchdowns. Three years later, the duo helped the Jets capture Super Bowl III. A four-time AFL All-Star, Maynard's 633 career catches and 11,834 reception yards were pro records at the time of his retirement.

Ernie Nevers

Inducted in 1963
Fullback
1929-31 Chicago Cardinals

Ernie Nevers owns the NFL record that has survived the longest. On Nov. 28, 1929, the Cardinals fullback scored a single-game record 40 points (on six TDs and four PATs) in a rout of the Bears. His college coach at Stanford, Pop Warner, once called Nevers "the football player without a fault" and compared him favorably to Jim Thorpe. Similar to Thorpe, Nevers could do everything well: run, pass, kick, call signals, and play rock-hard defense. He turned pro in 1926 with the NFL's Duluth Eskimos, and in 1930 and 1931 he was player-coach of the Cardinals. Nevers earned All-NFL honors in each of his five pro seasons.

Manny Rubio/WireImage/Getty Images

Roger Wehrli

Roger Wehrli

Inducted in 2007
Cornerback
1969-82 St. Louis Cardinals

The most recent franchise member chosen to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Roger Wehrli utilized speed, finesse, and strength to become one of the league's premier defensive backs. On two occasions—in 1970 and 1975—he picked off a career-high six passes, and though opposing quarterbacks rarely tested him, he retired having made 40 interceptions. He also possessed a knack for finding the ball and recovered 19 fumbles during his career. A member of two NFC East title teams, Wehrli was named to the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1970s, earned first-team All-Pro honors five times, and was selected to seven Pro Bowls.

Jackie Smith

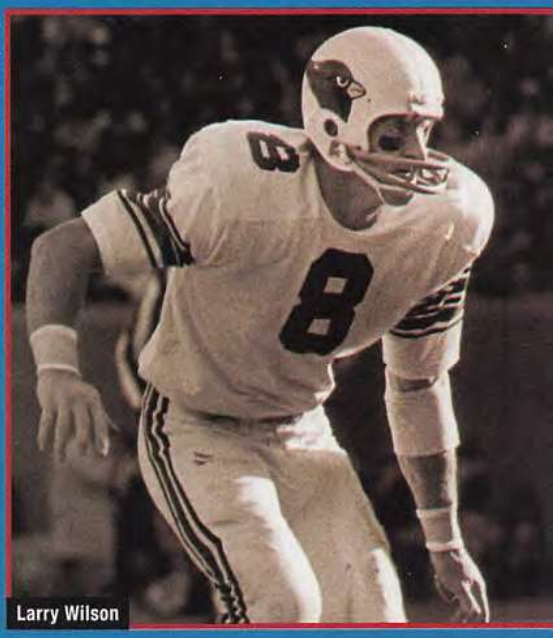
Inducted in 1994
Tight End
1963-77 St. Louis Cardinals

Jackie Smith was a fixture for 15 seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals. A talented receiver, a punishing blocker, a fierce competitor, and an excellent runner after the catch, Smith became the team's starting tight end as a rookie. He would help the Cardinals to a pair of NFL East titles, then finished his career with the Cowboys in 1978 and played in Super Bowl XIII. At the time of his retirement, Smith was the top all-time receiver among tight ends with 480 catches for 7,918 yards (16.5 avg.) and 40 touchdowns. Smith played in five straight Pro Bowls from 1967-71, and was named All-NFL in 1967 and again in 1969.

Jim Thorpe

Inducted in 1963
Halfback
1928 Chicago Cardinals

Jim Thorpe, one of the top athletes America has ever seen, ended his pro football career as a member of the Cardinals. Known for winning two gold medals at the 1912 Olympics, Thorpe joined the Canton Bulldogs in 1915—earning a stunning sum of $250 per game—and proved his worth by leading the team to three world championships. When the NFL was formed in 1920, its founders named Thorpe league president. He possessed speed and bruising power, and was unmatched in his ability to punt and kick. Thorpe's NFL career included stops with Cleveland, Oorang, Rock Island, and New York before returning to Canton in 1926.



Herbert Weltman/WireImage/Getty Images

Larry Wilson

Herbert Weltman/WireImage/Getty Images

Jackie Smith

Charley Trippi

Inducted in 1968
Halfback / Quarterback
1947-55 Chicago Cardinals

With the signing of University of Georgia All-American Charley Trippi, the Cardinals and the NFL dealt a huge blow to the rival AAFC. Trippi paid dividends in his rookie season, scoring touchdowns on a 44-yard run and a 75-yard punt return in Chicago's 1947 NFL Championship Game win over the Eagles. A versatile athlete, he was a halfback and quarterback for most of his career before moving almost exclusively to defense in 1954 and 1955. Trippi also was the team's punter and starred on the punt and kickoff return teams. He scored 37 career touchdowns, threw for another 16, and averaged 40.3 yards per punt.

Larry Wilson

Inducted in 1978
Free Safety
1960-72 St. Louis Cardinals

For 13 seasons, NFL quarterbacks felt the sting of Cardinals free safety Larry Wilson. If they weren't being knocked to the ground after a safety blitz, they were watching helplessly as Wilson picked off one of his 52 career interceptions (five that he returned for TDs). After literally making the team roster with an eye-catching effort in his final preseason game as a rookie, Wilson anchored St. Louis' defense for his entire career. He led the NFL with 10 interceptions in 1966, which included pickoffs in seven straight games. Wilson earned first- or second-team all-league honors seven times and played in eight Pro Bowls.

COMMUNITY ALL-STARS

WHEN IT COMES TO AIDING THOSE IN NEED, NFL PLAYERS AND TEAMS ANSWER THE CALL.

by Jim Natal

Mike Nowak/San Diego Chargers

Courtesy of the San Diego Chargers

In so many areas of life, it's what you don't see that's most important. Headlines, hype, and high-profile behavior—and misbehavior—don't tell you even a fraction of what goes on behind the scenes. This is true in the NFL, where there's a movement of community service that runs deeper and has more impact and resonance than any final score.

Even casual NFL fans know who Tony Gonzalez is. They could tell you that he's a stellar tight end and frequent Pro Bowl selection from the Kansas City Chiefs. Some might even know he's the league record-holder for career touchdown catches by players at his position. But how many are aware of his work with the Shadow Buddies program and how he has touched the lives of thousands of children?

"It's not about giving money," Gonzalez says of his tireless community service efforts. "It's about involvement. It's not just about writing a check. It's about making someone smile, showing someone you care."

Shadow Buddies was founded in 1996 by Kansas City native Marty Postlethwait in response to her young son Miles' struggle with congenital birth defects. A few years earlier, following one of many surgeries dating back to infancy, housebound Miles told his mom that he wished for a friend, "someone like me."

She made him a doll, one with stitches around the heart, and called it Miles' "shadow buddy," a name inspired by the song "Me and My Shadow." Nurses at a hospital later saw the shadow buddy and loved it, telling Marty they wished they had dolls like it for all the children on their wards. Postlethwait saw the potential and made it her cause.

"I guess you could say it was fate," Gonzalez now says of his involvement with Shadow Buddies. "When I was a rookie in 1997, [Chiefs community relations director] Brenda Sniezek told me there was a foundation I should look at because 'it's new, just like you.' I talked to Marty and met Miles and it was a perfect match."

Gonzalez has since created his own foundation and through it has helped Shadow Buddies grow from a local to a national, and recently international, program. There currently are 22 condition-specific Shadow Buddies, plus one special Tony Gonzalez version in particularly high demand. Beyond the comfort and security they provide, Shadow Buddies are used as teaching tools by doctors, nurses, and counselors to explain upcoming medical procedures to children and to help parents, siblings, and classmates understand what young patients are experiencing.

"Laughter, joy, kindness, and caring make people better than any medicine," says Gonzalez. "When I'm out there with Shadow Buddies, it's the best feeling anyone could ever have. It's right up there with scoring touchdowns in front of 80,000 people. This work was important to me when I came into the league, and it won't stop when I leave the league."

Out in San Diego, Chargers wide receiver and Pro Bowl special teamer Kassim Osgood has been nicknamed "The Mayor of San Diego" by his teammates for his extensive community contacts and involvement with non-profit causes.

"I have a thousand ideas about ways to better the community," says Osgood. "And by working with Steven Haynes of Athletes for Education, I was able to implement my own educational motivation program—Team K.O. I was raised in church and came from humble beginnings. I know the importance of being part of a community."

Osgood says he's always thinking of ways to expand the reach and raise local participation in Team K.O.

"One time I was watching *Iron Chef* with [teammate] Mike Goff. We thought something like that would be a great way to raise money for the program."

The result: "The Battle of the Chefs," featuring some of the finest culinary craftsmen in San Diego. That event, along with others such as an annual golf tournament at Del Mar Country Club, keeps Team K.O. funded. Osgood himself donates 80 tickets to each Chargers home game, most going to area school children to encourage academic achievement.

"The kids who receive game tickets are selected for their outstanding academics and citizenship," explains Osgood. "I remember one student who, after being told he couldn't go to a game because of his grades, went from an 'F' to an 'A.' The tickets are great incentives for students to apply themselves and turn their grades around."

Perhaps no player in the league has been able to define and focus his extensive community involvement as effectively as Chicago Bears guard Roberto Garza, who, along with Gonzalez, is among a growing number of NFL players from Latino backgrounds. Garza grew up in Rio Hondo, Texas, after his parents moved there from Mexico about a year before he was born. Diabetes is heavily prevalent among Hispanics, something Garza learned all too well when his diabetic grandfather in Mexico had to have a toe amputated as a result of complications from the disease.

Hank Young/Kansas City Chiefs

(Opposite page) **Kassim Osgood (top) visits with kids seated in the Chargers Community Corner. Chicago's Roberto Garza offers instruction during a YMCA event last summer.** (This page) **Tony Gonzalez discusses the Shadow Buddies program with students at a Kansas City school.**

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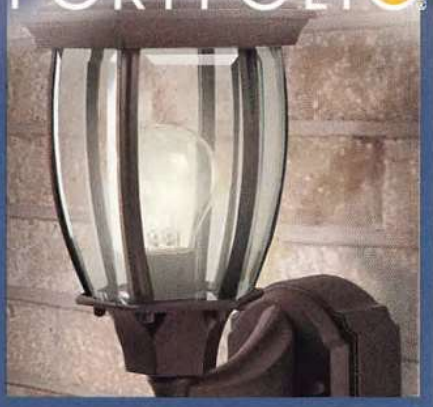

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"When I came into the NFL [as a rookie with the Falcons] in 2001," Garza says, "it was an opportunity to work for diabetes awareness."

In conjunction with the American Diabetes Association, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and others, Garza appeared in print, radio, and TV national public service announcements in both English and Spanish promoting diabetes education. A similar series of PSAs was created during the 2007 preseason featuring Garza as a Chicago Bear.

Garza, in three seasons with Chicago, has become an ambassador to the city's Hispanic community and is an icon back in Rio Hondo, where a street is named in his honor. His "Fútbol Americano con Roberto" program introduces Hispanic youngsters, many of whom think of "football" only as soccer, to American football. During preseason, he sponsored a Hispanic Day at training camp for 300 kids from a local YMCA.

When Garza speaks to Latino youth, he is in a unique position to relate to them and get his message across. "I'm a first generation kid," says the former National Honor Society student and Texas A&M-Kingsville graduate. "I can tell kids, 'I came from a home just like yours, with both parents working and sacrificing. I ate what you eat. I did what you do. I dreamed of playing in the NFL and here I am.'"

Leveraging the team's resources and star power, the Eagles Eye Mobile provides free comprehensive vision care to underprivileged children in Philadelphia.

Courtesy of Eagles Youth Partnership

Gonzalez, Osgood, and Garza are not alone in their commitment to public service. In fact, almost everyone involved with NFL clubs—players, coaches, front office personnel, and ownership—participates in community outreach efforts. Each NFL team considers itself an integral part of its community, implementing social outreach and youth betterment programs locally as well as assisting in the league's 34-year commitment to the United Way by supporting local chapters.

Many NFL teams also have developed special relationships with diverse charitable organizations. The Dallas Cowboys, for example, are well known for their work on behalf of the Salvation Army. Other teams—including the Jets, Steelers, and Seahawks—have participated in events supporting the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation in its efforts to combat breast cancer. And the New Orleans Saints, as a club and as individuals, have made major contributions to the NFL's ongoing multimillion-dollar Hurricane Katrina relief and Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts.

To learn more about NFL community service and youth programs, and to find out how you can team up with the NFL in your community, visit jointheteam.com, or visit individual club web sites through NFL.com.

Some teams have taken community involvement to another level, with innovative programs that serve as models not only for other NFL clubs, but also for local governments. In Philadelphia, the non-profit Eagles Youth Partnership (EYP) "goes deep and wide," according to executive director Sarah Martinez-Helfman, who oversees a dedicated full-time staff of six. "Since 1995 we've leveraged the star power, presence, and resources of the Eagles and their corporate and non-profit partners."

At last summer's annual carnival and auction, more than $1 million was raised to help two of its signature programs keep rolling—literally. The Eagles Eye Mobile visits area schools and provides comprehensive professional eye exams. If vision deficiencies are detected, the EYP provides free high-quality prescription eyeglasses and gives additional attention to those children with more serious problems, including funding for surgery, if necessary. The Eye Mobile program served more than 3,300 children in 2006 alone, with 78 percent of those tested needing glasses. A companion program, the Eagles Book Mobile, distributes free new books and reaches more than 40,000 regional youngsters each year.

On a national scale, the NFL prides itself on its corporate citizenship, with Commissioner Roger Goodell continuing the league's long tradition of giving. Through NFL Charities, the league's charitable arm founded in 1973, more than $10 million is donated each year to worthy causes, organizations, and player foundations. These include the Shadow Buddies program, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and spinal cord injury research. The NFL also responds to national and international disasters such as the Sept. 11 attacks, the tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia in 2004, Hurricane Katrina, and last fall's wildfires in southern California.

The league also encourages local volunteerism and administers several annual recognition programs and awards, among them NFL Teacher and High School Coach of the Year, the Community Quarterback volunteer award, and the prestigious Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award, given to a player (or players) for excellence on the field and in the community. San Diego running back LaDainian Tomlinson and New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees were last year's Payton recipients.

One of the league's primary initiatives targeting youth is titled "Play 60: The NFL Movement for an Active Generation." Designed to tackle childhood obesity, NFL Play 60 promotes health and wellness to its young fans by encouraging them to be active for at least 60 minutes a day. One in-school program that forms a key part of NFL Play 60 is What Moves U, launched in conjunction with the American Heart Association, designed to help teachers get their students physically active in the classroom.

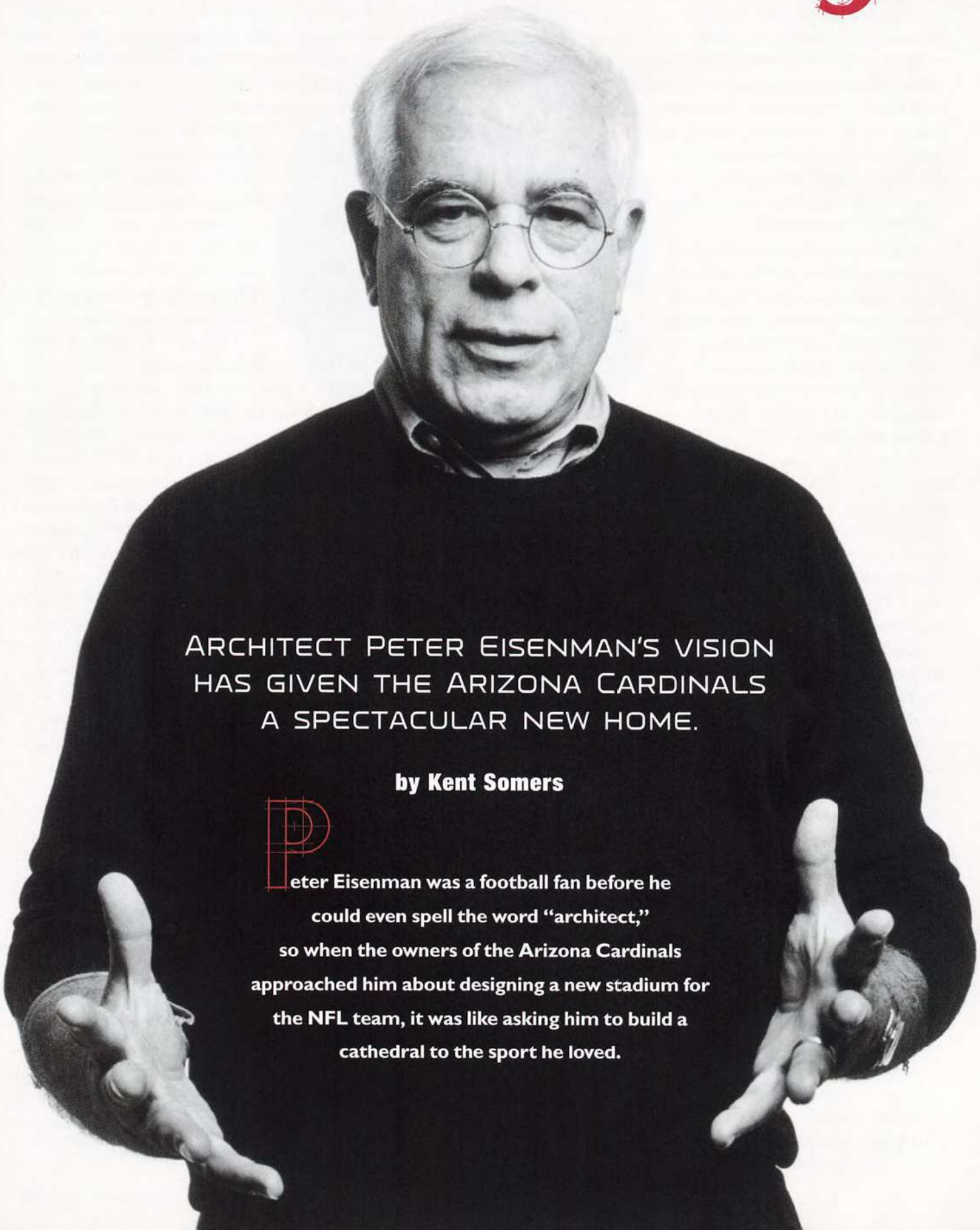
"We're trying to get kids excited about exercise," says Giants quarterback and New York-area What Moves U spokesman Eli Manning, who also is a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. "[Too often] kids come home from school and go straight to the computer.

"The benefits of exercise for increasingly inactive kids go beyond the problem of obesity. Regular exercise helps kids do better in school and gives them more energy. Plus, sports and team activities improve social, leadership, and life skills."

More than 15,000 middle school teachers nationwide have received What Moves U program activation kits. "Our commitment to fans and the communities that support us," says Goodell, "does not end when the final seconds tick off the game clock."

Jim Natal is a writer and poet living in Prescott, Ariz. A former NFL creative executive, his third poetry collection, Memory and Rain, *will be published this fall by Red Hen Press.*

Master of Design



ARCHITECT PETER EISENMAN'S VISION HAS GIVEN THE ARIZONA CARDINALS A SPECTACULAR NEW HOME.

by Kent Somers

Peter Eisenman was a football fan before he could even spell the word "architect," so when the owners of the Arizona Cardinals approached him about designing a new stadium for the NFL team, it was like asking him to build a cathedral to the sport he loved.

Udo Hesse/akg-images

His father, Herschel, played football at Rutgers University and Eisenman has attended the school's games since the 1930s. He's also been a New York Giants season-ticket holder for years. Between the two, he attends 15 or so contests each fall and considers it a good year "if I win eight and lose seven."

Yet, his interest in Super Bowl XLII won't necessarily be tied to what happens on the field. It will be in watching the reaction of fans entering University of Phoenix Stadium for the first time—how they respond to its unique design based on the shape of a barrel cactus (a plant that's indigenous to the area); its vertical slots and translucent roof that provide an incredible amount of natural light; its trusses that span the roof like spider webbing; and its shimmering silver skin that is visible for miles across the desert horizon.

His goal was to design a stadium that would be an Arizona icon for years, one that aged well, and a facility that looked nothing like anything else that had ever been done. It was designed to host Super Bowls, and Eisenman plans to be on hand for the building's first one.

"I'm hoping to scrounge up a ticket," he joked last fall. "I don't need to go the game. I'd just like to be there for the stadium."

University of Phoenix Stadium is a twin triumph for Eisenman and the Bidwill family, the long-time owners of the Cardinals who for years had looked to move out of Arizona State's Sun Devil Stadium and into their own facility. Even before voters approved funding for the new stadium, the Bidwills knew they wanted a unique design, something that would be more than an update of the latest look.

The family invested $150 million in stadium construction, and they made it clear it was important to have a building that would stand the test of time.

"We wanted to take the opportunity to do something that was significant and something that was iconic for our community," says Michael Bidwill, the Cardinals president, who spearheaded the project.

So the family approached Eisenman, a highly respected New York architect who had never designed a stadium before. Also brought on board was HOK, a renowned stadium designer based in Kansas City.

The two formed a championship team. HOK took care of things such as sight lines and the placement of concession stands and scoreboards; Eisenman's job was to make the place look different from any other stadium in the country. And while Eisenman, a 1954 graduate of Cornell, knew football, the combination of being a fan and a designer sometimes proved more detrimental than an advantage.

"I think it probably impeded me as an architect," he admits. A typical stadium designer often sacrifices what Eisenman calls "architectural superiority" to make a functional stadium for fans.

"[But] I think you have to do both," he says, "to continue to drive to make an icon or a landmark and also make a functional stadium. The fact they [HOK] haven't done that very often and the fact that we together achieved that, it says something else happened. And that something else is we insisted on keeping the design integrity in focus."

The stadium has drawn many favorable reviews for its architecture, with one observer describing it as a coiled rattlesnake. Those who don't like it say it looks as if a UFO has landed in the middle of cotton fields in Glendale, albeit an incredibly fan-friendly UFO.

No one can argue that it's different. The $455 million stadium, built with a mix of public and private funds, includes a retractable roof and a natural grass playing surface that slides in and out on a tray, allowing the field to receive natural sunlight and remain outdoors except on game-days. On the northwest end, there's what Eisenman describes as a "grand entrance" with a ramp and lots of secondary steel.

As fans travel the escalators, they can observe "the play between the concrete and exterior structural steel," Eisenman explains. Once in their seats, they can look up and see light steel trusses that give the roof a spider-web look. And if they look around, they'll see 21 vertical slots that provide views to the outside and allow sunshine to stream in.

"I think the effect of the light is stunning," Eisenman says. "It truly is fabulous."

The slots and the translucent roof give the building a strong stream of natural light, avoiding the dark feel that besets other domed facilities.

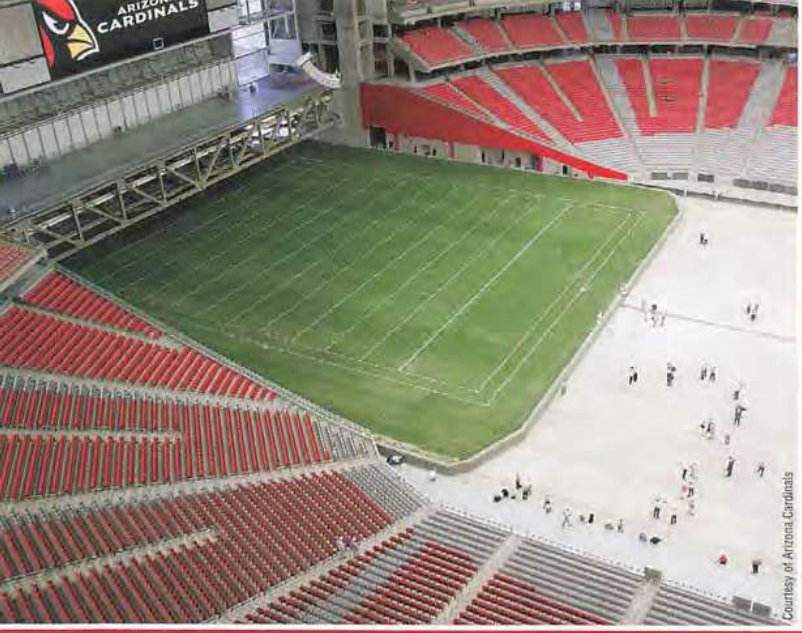
"With the slots, we wanted to have something that joined the inside with the outside," Eisenman says, "combining the natural environment with the man-made environment, which I think is so important. And I like to think we achieved that. It's like looking through a picket fence."

While the Bidwill family might have done a few things differently

Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

Courtesy of Arizona Cardinals

Architect Peter Eisenman's latest masterpiece is University of Phoenix Stadium, home of the Arizona Cardinals and Super Bowl XLII.



Courtesy of Arizona Cardinals

Courtesy of Eisenman Architects

(Left) **One of the unique aspects of University of Phoenix Stadium is its sliding natural grass field, the first of its kind in North America, that allows the grass to remain outdoors and exposed to natural light except on game days.** (Right) **Eisenman poses with Cardinals chairman and owner Bill Bidwill during construction of the stadium.**

"It's a beautiful stadium, inside and out, and it was really done with the fan in mind. I've walked around it and there isn't an area I've found that's not fan friendly when it comes to viewing the field."

~Arizona Cardinals fan Jim Sivigny

in their more than decade-long pursuit of the stadium, there is nothing about the building they would change.

"I think the architecture and the interiors have really turned out to be terrific," Michael Bidwill says. "Given the large investment we were making, we wanted to make sure this stadium appears modern and forward-looking decades from now. We wanted to introduce high design into sports facilities, and with Peter Eisenman's design, we've done that in a very bold and exciting way."

Football fans in Arizona have few complaints about the stadium. The seats are comfortable. The sight lines are clear. The Great Lawn—an expanse of grass on the west side of the stadium—has become a popular gathering spot for tailgating. And, after broiling in the heat at Sun Devil Stadium for 18 years, it's nice for fans to be sitting in seats that have backs and arm rests, and in a facility with air conditioning.

"Just when you're [a few] feet away from the entrance at the stadium, the blast of coolness hits you—air conditioning," says Jim Sivigny, a fan from nearby Gilbert. "A roof that closes in August and September is what we lacked at Sun Devil Stadium."

For Cardinals players, especially the ones who previously toiled at the old Arizona State facility, University of Phoenix Stadium is luxurious. The locker room is expansive and sits just a few yards from the field, unlike the cramped dressing area that's located in a separate building at Sun Devil Stadium.

The new home has made a difference at the box office, too. Previously, the Cardinals were fortunate to draw 30,000 fans to certain games. While the team's inconsistent on-field success played a part in that, so did the weather. It's not uncommon for area temperatures to reach 100 degrees well into October and sitting outdoors on metal bleachers in that heat was akin to steak searing on a grill.

In contrast, the Cardinals have sold out every game at University of Phoenix Stadium, both preseason and regular season, starting with their first game there in August 2006 when they defeated the defending Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers.

"It's a beautiful stadium, inside and out, and it was really done with the fan in mind," says Sivigny of the 63,400-seat facility voted top stadium in the NFL by *SportsBusiness Journal* and *SportsBusiness Daily*. "I've walked around it and there isn't an area I've found that's not fan friendly when it comes to viewing the field."

Cardinals players, many who saw the stadium just days before their first home exhibition game, were taken aback by their new abode.

"It's about time," joked defensive end Bertrand Berry when asked for his first reaction upon entering the facility. "When you're in the desert, you need something to cover up from the heat. It's a beautiful stadium. It's tops in the league, and we're very proud of it."

Like any architect, Eisenman was curious how the public would react to his work. People who knew him said they loved it, and they all asked for tours. But what about the average fan seeing it for the first time? To find out, Eisenman attended last January's Bowl Championship Series (BCS) title game between the University of Florida and Ohio State. He arrived four hours before kickoff, simply to see fans stream into the place and gauge their reaction.

It was worth it.

"It was like a Catholic attending Easter Mass in a cathedral he might have built," Eisenman says. "Just walking among the fans, listening to them talk, I think there was a sense of shock and awe."

On Super Bowl Sunday, Peter Eisenman can expect to see that reaction all over again…if he can get a ticket.

Kent Somers writes for The Arizona Republic *and has covered the Arizona Cardinals for the past 12 years.*

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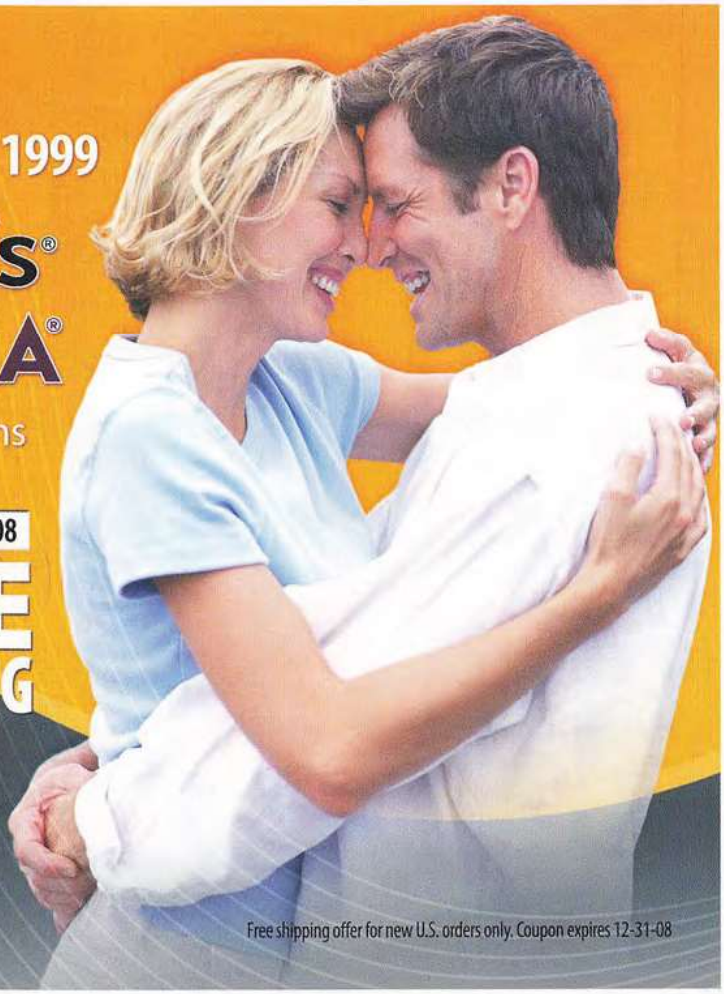

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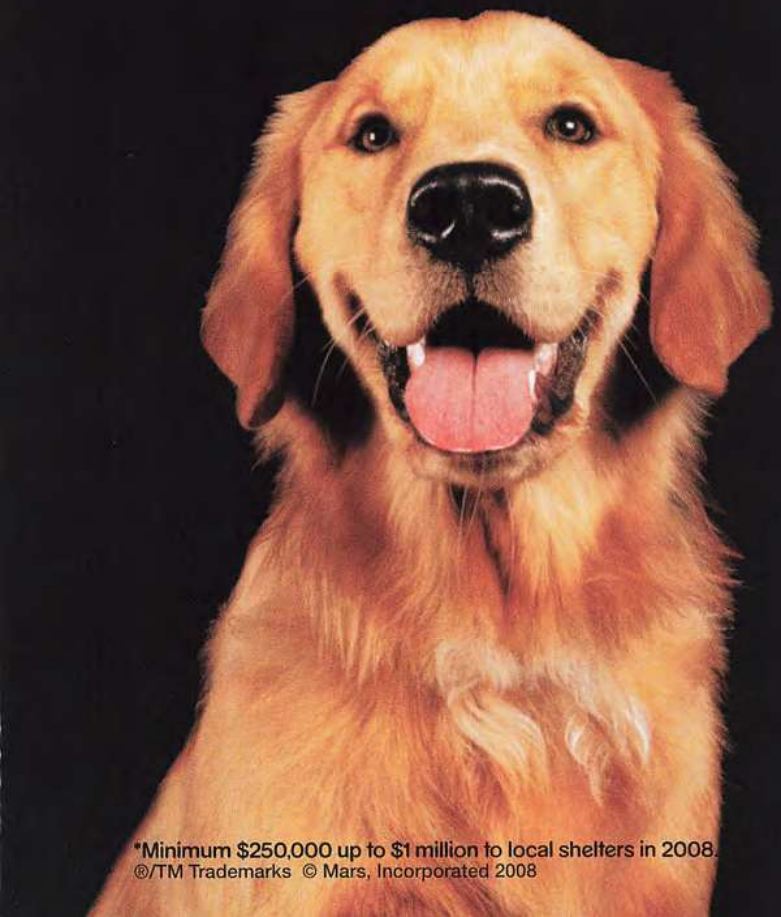

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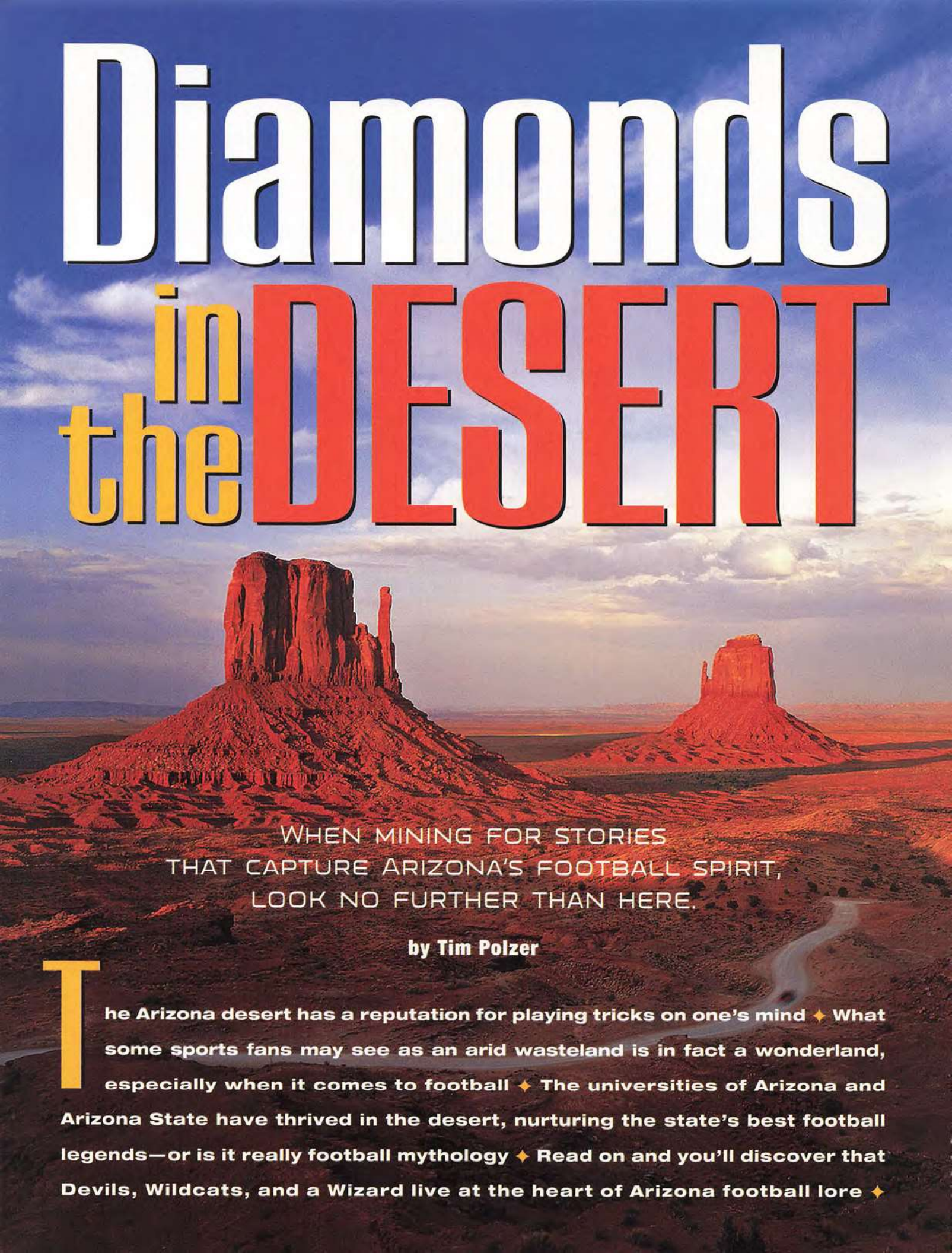
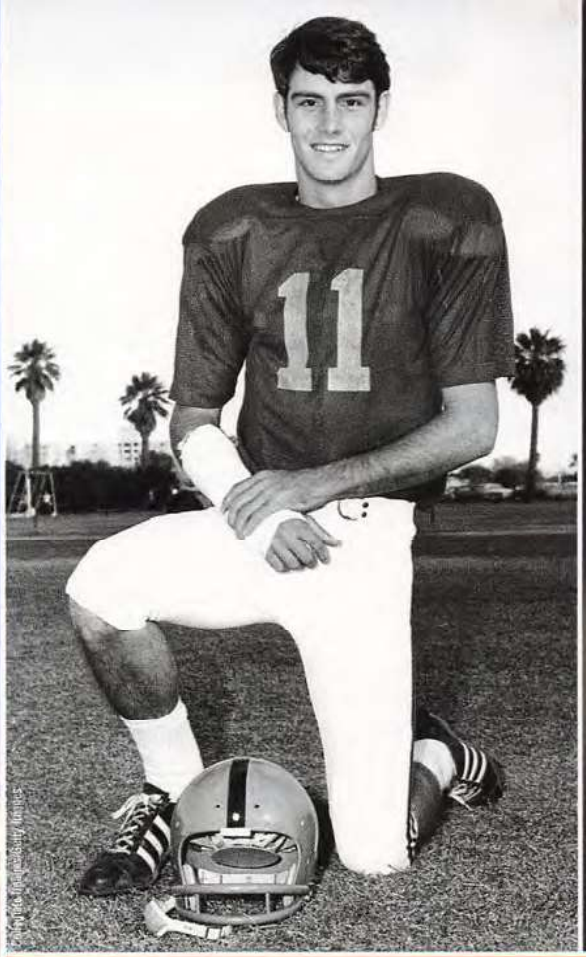
Diamonds in the DESERT



WHEN MINING FOR STORIES THAT CAPTURE ARIZONA'S FOOTBALL SPIRIT, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN HERE.

by Tim Polzer

The Arizona desert has a reputation for playing tricks on one's mind ✦ What some sports fans may see as an arid wasteland is in fact a wonderland, especially when it comes to football ✦ The universities of Arizona and Arizona State have thrived in the desert, nurturing the state's best football legends—or is it really football mythology ✦ Read on and you'll discover that Devils, Wildcats, and a Wizard live at the heart of Arizona football lore ✦



Carrying on the football tradition established by his father, "Whizzer," Danny White starred at Arizona State and later led the Dallas Cowboys to three NFC East titles.

Danny White

Legend has it that back in 1942, a freshman stood nervously before a Mesa High School assembly, facing a captive student body and faculty that could make or break his teenage world for the next four years. Wilford White was looking to pull some magic out of his pocket.

With a deep breath of determination, White stepped up to center stage resolved to winning over hearts and minds with an unforgettable demonstration of talent. When he was introduced as "The Wizard of the Harmonica," he pulled the blues harp out of his pocket and began to play. A nickname was born, if not yet a legend. The legend came later, when White put his harmonica down and made Mesa listen.

At the time, Wilford "Whizzer" White was barely 5-foot-9 inches and 165 pounds, but his speed and penchant for crazy cross-field jaunts gave football in Arizona a jolt of notoriety that lives on 60 years later. While playing for Mesa, White established state records with 4,307 career and 1,991 single-season rushing yards, as well as 52 career touchdowns, half of which came in one especially amazing season.

While "Whizzer" seemed an appropriate nickname considering his habit of running 50 yards to gain 10, White was not the first running back to carry that moniker, a fact that led to instances of coincidental confusion.

"The newspaper guys picked up on the Whizzer nickname and connected it to Byron "Whizzer" White, who was an All-American about 10 years ahead of me at [the University of] Colorado," said White, after being selected as part of the inaugural class for the Arizona High School Sports Hall of Fame. "And it stuck to me like glue."

In 1945, his senior season, he averaged a state-record 181 yards rushing per game, led the Jackrabbits to a state championship, and was named Arizona's Player of the Year. The naturally athletic White also averaged 42.5 yards as a punter and helped Mesa's basketball team win a state title.

"The Whiz was absolutely electric," said Tom Fridena, who competed against White while attending Tucson High School, to the *Arizona Republic*. "He could jig and juke, give you a leg and take it away. Not only was he fast, he was also smart—if you can believe it."

After his senior season at Mesa High, Whizzer's decision to pass on scholarship offers from Southern Cal and Tennessee to attend nearby Arizona State put the college's football program on the national map. His exciting offensive performances helped boost attendance and lift the Sun Devils from a 4-7 record his freshman year to 9-2 in his final season. Operating out of the Lazy-T formation, White led the nation in rushing as a senior with 1,502 yards while scoring 22 touchdowns.

He played two seasons in the National Football League with the Chicago Bears, appearing in just 17 games, but the White name would later have a larger impact on pro football. For if Whizzer White is considered by some as the best athlete to come out of Arizona, the only competition likely is his son, Danny, who began sharing his father's love for Arizona sports long before high school.

"My dad's career and interest in sports was the start of it all," White says. "Friday nights were spent watching Mesa High and, later, Westwood. But the ritual for my dad and me was going to ASU football,

Adam Hunger/US Presswire

US Presswire

Tedy Bruschi has long been inspired by the story of University of Arizona legend John "Button" Salmon. The three-time Super Bowl champion returned to pro football in 2006, just seven months after suffering a stroke.

It's no wonder why. White went on to set seven NCAA passing records, and the Sun Devils lost but four games while capturing bowl games in all three years he quarterbacked the team.

After a brief stint with the Memphis Southmen of the World Football League, White joined the Dallas Cowboys in 1976. He excelled as an NFL punter until being handed the unenviable role of replacing Cowboys hero Roger Staubach. White withstood the tremendous pressure of following a Hall of Famer, setting a team single-season record for touchdown passes and leading the Cowboys to three NFC East titles and five trips to the playoffs.

Did he live up to his father's legend? That question was answered in the affirmative in 1999, when the *Arizona Republic* named Danny the state's Greatest Athlete of the 20th Century.

basketball, baseball, and track events. My heroes were Curley Culp, Ron Pritchard, and Charley Taylor."

Danny immediately became Mesa Westwood's most versatile athlete, earning all-state honors in baseball, basketball, and track. With White at quarterback, the Westwood football team never suffered a losing season, but baseball figured to be his future…until a pair of pigskin performances during his senior year caught the eye of an Arizona legend.

In Westwood's homecoming game, White led the Warriors to a 100-6 thumping of Kofa High School. In an all-star game later that year, he starred on both sides of the ball, throwing three touchdown passes and grabbing three interceptions in the second half alone.

"Frank Kush was in the crowd and that probably got me into ASU," White says. Kush, the notoriously tough coach, decided that he had to have White join the Sun Devils on their next week of scorching two-a-days at Camp Tontozona—only he was out of football scholarships. Not to be denied, Kush used White's multi-sport prowess to his advantage. He talked ASU baseball coach Bobby Winkles into offering the prospect a baseball scholarship.

Arizona State fans rejoiced at the chance to have another White in their backfield, but the pressure of not living up to his father's legend crossed Danny's mind. He had committed to Brigham Young until Kush and Winkles teamed up to talk him into remaining in-state for college. The freshman quarterback walked into the heat and decided to stay in the kitchen.

"What at first was unbelievable pressure quickly turned into fun because of an unbelievable support system," White says. "Woody Green, Benny Malone, Brent McClanahan, Steve Holden, Joe Petty and guys like Steve Madlock, Roger Davis, and Mike Tomco all protecting me. By the middle of my sophomore year, football had replaced baseball as my favorite sport."

Tedy Bruschi

In 1926, the University of Arizona campus was rocked by news that quarterback and student body president John "Button" Salmon was fatally injured in a car accident. While football coach J.F. "Pop" McKale stood by his fallen star's deathbed, Salmon passed along a final message for his Wildcat teammates: "Tell them…tell the team to bear down." After Salmon's death, Arizona students made "Bear Down" the official slogan of all the university's sports teams.

Eight decades later, no Wildcat has lived up to Salmon's charge better than Tedy Bruschi. While growing up on some of San Francisco's roughest streets, Bruschi discovered football and turned his energy and emotion toward a way out. That path became clearer when Arizona coach Dick Tomey offered Bruschi a scholarship. Playing under the magic of "A" Mountain, Bruschi set a school mark with 19 sacks as a sophomore and finished with an NCAA-record 52 career sacks as the heart of Tomey's "Desert Storm" defense.

At 6-1, 247 pounds, Bruschi was considered too small to play on the defensive line in the NFL, but then-New England Patriots coach Bill Parcells and defensive coordinator Bill Belichick saw something special in the three-time All-American. Bruschi's nose for the ball and tireless intensity earned him selection as the Patriots' third-round choice in the 1996 draft.

He moved to linebacker and became the heart of a defense that corralled the Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI and the Panthers in Super Bowl XXXVIII. Nothing seemed capable of slowing down "Bear Down" Bruschi, until 2005 when he complained of numbness in his left arm and leg, as well as blurred vision and a headache.

It was later determined that Bruschi—just days after his fourth-quarter interception of Philadelphia's Donovan McNabb in Super Bowl XXXIX helped seal another Patriots championship—had suffered a stroke. In fact, doctors told him he could have died if the

Scott Wachter/Corbis

Reuters/Corbis

Rick Scuteri/US Presswire

Passion and loyalty were trademarks that allowed the late Pat Tillman to become one of the most popular players to ever suit up for Arizona State or the Cardinals.

blood clot that circulated from his legs to his brain had settled a few millimeters to one side or the other.

When doctors discovered a congenital defect in Bruschi's heart, he heard the whispers of retirement all around him. But the hard-nosed defender would not give up. He channeled his tremendous drive into a rehabilitation program that allowed him to make a miraculous return to the Patriots just seven months later.

His comeback was enough to squeeze the heartstrings of fans from archrival Arizona State. While poring through hundreds of e-mails and letters, Bruschi found the following pat on the back: "Dear Tedy, I went to Arizona State, and I've always hated you. But I admire you for what you've overcome."

One year later, while sidelined by a broken wrist, the thought of surviving and returning from a potentially life-ending stroke couldn't lift Bruschi's spirits. Until the Wildcat remembered Salmon's last request, and wrote "Bear Down" on his cast.

Pat Tillman

In life and in death, perhaps no player has personified the spirit of football in Arizona more than Pat Tillman. Fans could not help but relate to this dedicated overachiever as he chased down opponents in Sun Devil Stadium, first as a linebacker for ASU and later as a safety for the Arizona Cardinals. And they could not help but shed a tear when his heart and mission took him away.

Arizona got its first taste of Tillman's unique personality during a recruiting trip to Tempe. The Sun Devils were one of just three Division I-A schools that considered giving a scholarship to a slow kid who stood less than six feet tall and couldn't push the scale past 200. As the now legendary story goes, ASU coach Bruce Snyder asked the San Jose teenager what he thought of the recruiting process. Tillman's answer: "It stinks." The truth always worked for Tillman, and Snyder liked the answer enough to award him his last remaining scholarship—a decision he almost regretted when the freshman refused to be red-shirted.

"I'm not redshirting," Tillman declared. "I've got things to do with my life." Again, Snyder relented. Slowly, but surely, Tillman's honesty made Snyder and the Sun Devil faithful true believers.

Tillman's determination went to work, and he climbed his way up the ranks of the ASU depth chart to become a fan favorite as a special teams madman. By his junior season, Tillman was not only starting at linebacker but was turning heads as the team's best defender. As a senior in 1997, he was named the Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year.

Living up to his "life" declaration, Tillman also went to work on his education and earned academic All-America honors and a marketing degree in less than four years.

Shying away from the spotlight could not prevent Tillman from becoming a colorful folk hero off the field. Arizona State students and faculty waved to him as he pedaled around Mill Street on his bicycle or sought solitude by climbing one of Sun Devil Stadium's 200-foot light towers. Coaches smiled as Tillman performed his daily ritual—sitting in the Sun Devils' weight room, eating apple sauce and drinking grapefruit juice while reading that day's edition of *The Wall Street Journal*.

Too small to play linebacker in the NFL, Tillman was drafted by the Cardinals and successfully shifted to safety, starting 10 games as a rookie. During his third NFL season, he set a Cardinals record with 224 tackles. During the offseason, he fought off boredom by running in a marathon and, later, a triathlon.

Tillman turned more heads when, out of loyalty, he passed on a multimillion dollar offer from the St. Louis Rams and instead accepted a $512,000 contract to remain with the Cardinals.

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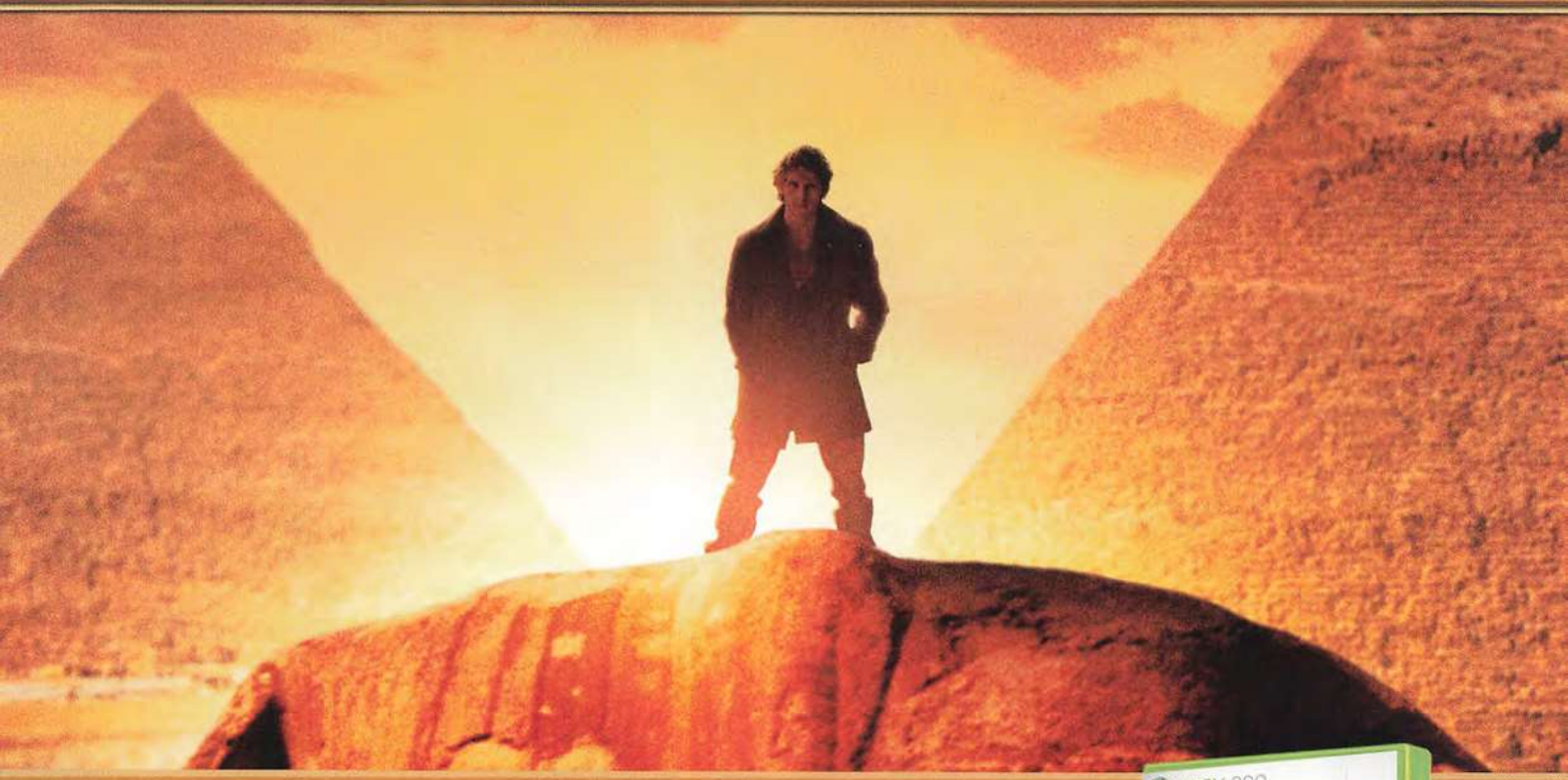

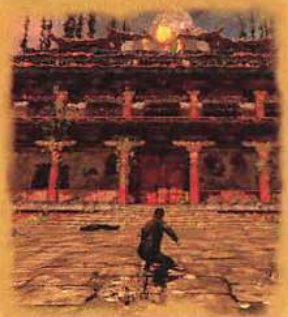

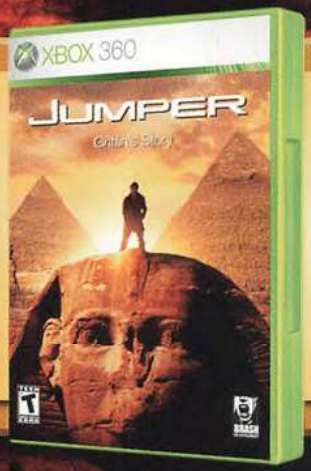

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REGENCY

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PlayStation 2

XBOX 360

Wii

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It was Tillman's loyalty and conscience that filled his heart after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. In an NFL Films interview the following day, Tillman revealed the dilemma staring him straight in the eyes.

"My great-grandfather was at Pearl Harbor and a lot of family has gone and fought in wars," he said. "And I really haven't done a damn thing."

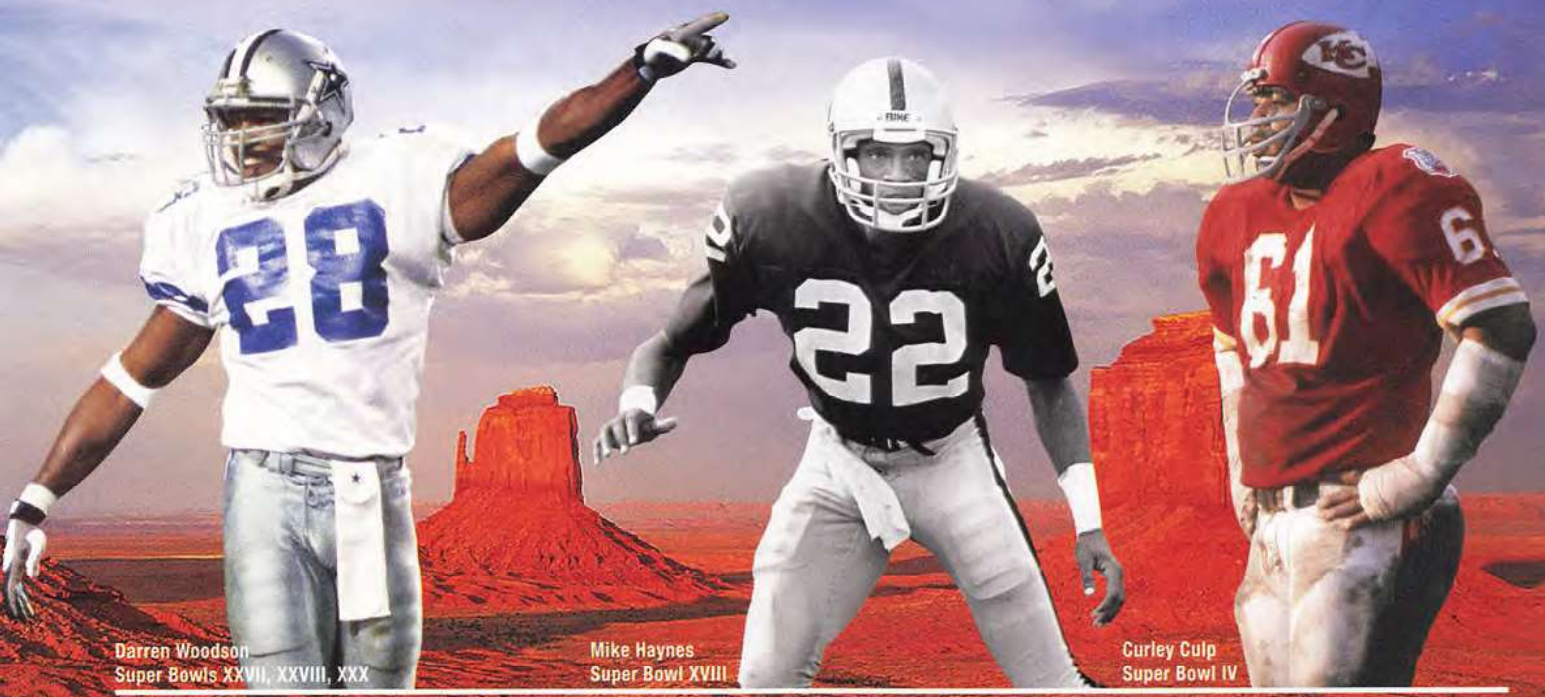
The world didn't have to wait long for Tillman's biggest and final surprise: Saying thanks, but no thanks to a Cardinals contract worth $3.6 million, he instead enlisted in the Army Rangers with his brother Kevin.

After surviving a tour of duty in Iraq, Tillman finally lost a battle. In April of 2004, Tillman was killed in Afghanistan. As word of his death spread, the NFL and ASU honored their fallen hero, retiring his jersey and sponsoring tributes and scholarships in his name.

Fans created makeshift memorials outside the Victory Bell at Sun Devil Stadium and at the Cardinals practice facility, shows of admiration that likely would have elicited nothing more than a silent—though appreciative—shrug from Tillman as he pedaled by on his bike.

Tim Polzer is a Dallas-based sportswriter who has covered the NFL for more than a decade. He is editor-in-chief of High School Sports—The Magazine.

ARIZONA COLLEGIANS WHO HAVE PLAYED IN THE SUPER BOWL



Darren Woodson
Super Bowls XXVII, XXVIII, XXX

Mike Haynes
Super Bowl XVIII

Curley Culp
Super Bowl IV

Left to right: Peter Brouillet/WireImage/Getty Images; Michael A. Elliott/WireImage/Getty Images; Darryl Norenberg/WireImage/Getty Images

University of Arizona Alums

Theo Bell, WR, Pittsburgh Steelers (XIII, XIV)
Lance Briggs, LB, Chicago Bears (XLI)
Tedy Bruschi, LB, New England Patriots (XXXI, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX)
Trung Canidate, RB, St. Louis Rams (XXXVI)
John Fina, OL, Buffalo Bills (XXVII, XXVIII)
Mike Freeman, C, Denver Broncos (XXI, XXII)
Ron Gardin, CB/WR, Baltimore Colts (V)
Brad Henke, DL, Denver Broncos (XXIV)
Mitch Hoopes, P, Dallas Cowboys (X)
Ricky Hunley, LB, Denver Broncos (XXI, XXII)
Vance Johnson WR, Denver Broncos (XXI, XXII, XXIV)
Brandon Manumaleuna, TE, St. Louis Rams (XXXVI)
Chris McAlister, CB, Baltimore Ravens (XXXV)
Frank Middleton, OG, Oakland Raiders (XXXVII)
Josh Miller, P, New England Patriots (XXXIX)
Edwin Mulitalo, OG, Baltimore Ravens (XXXV)
Glenn Parker, OL, Buffalo Bills (XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII); New York Giants (XXXV)
Jose Portilla, OT, Atlanta Falcons (XXXIII)
Randy Robbins, CB/S, Denver Broncos (XXI, XXII, XXIV)
Joe Salave'a, DT, Tennessee Titans (XXXIV)
Joe Tafoya, DE, Seattle Seahawks, (XL)
Jackie Wallace, CB, Minnesota (IX); Los Angeles Rams (XIV)

Arizona State Alums

Adam Archuleta, DB, St. Louis Rams (XXXVI)
Walt Bowyer, DE, Denver Broncos (XXII)
Bob Breunig, LB, Dallas Cowboys (X, XII, XIII)
Shante Carver, DE, Dallas Cowboys (XXX)
Darren Comeaux, LB, Denver Broncos (XXI)
Curley Culp, DL, Kansas City Chiefs (IV)
Mike Fanucci, DE, Washington Redskins (VII)
David Fulcher, SS, Cincinnati Bengals (XXIII)
Larry Gordon, LB, Miami Dolphins (XVII)
Windlan Hall, DB, Minnesota Vikings (XI)
Bruce Hardy, TE, Miami Dolphins (XVII, XIX)
Mike Haynes, CB, L.A. Raiders (XVIII)
Junior Ioane, DT, Oakland Raiders (XXXVII)
Jim Jeffcoat, DL, Dallas Cowboys (XXVII, XXVIII)
Jason Kyle, LB, Carolina Panthers (XXXVIII)
Brent McClanahan, RB, Minnesota Vikings (IX, XI)
Skip McClendon, DL, Cincinnati Bengals (XXIII)
Craig Newsome, CB, Green Bay Packers (XXXI)
J.R. Redmond, RB, New England Patriots (XXXVI)
Mike Richardson, CB, Chicago Bears (XX)
Gerald Riggs, RB, Washington Redskins (XXVI)
Grey Ruegamer, New England Patriots (XXXVI)
Jerry Smith, TE, Washington Redskins (VII)
Marvel Smith, T, Pittsburgh Steelers (XL)
Charley Taylor, RB/WR, Washington Redskins (VII)
Larry Todd, FL, Oakland Raiders (II)
Robert Weathers, RB, New England Patriots (XX)
Danny White, QB/P, Dallas Cowboys (XII, XIII)
Travis Williams, RB, Green Bay Packers (II)
Darren Woodson, LB/S, Dallas Cowboys (XXVII, XXVIII, XXX)

Arizona Western JC Alums

Eddie Edwards, DE/DT, Cincinnati (XVI, XXIII)
Willie Hall, LB, Oakland Raiders (XI)
Skip Thomas, CB/S, Oakland Raiders (XI)

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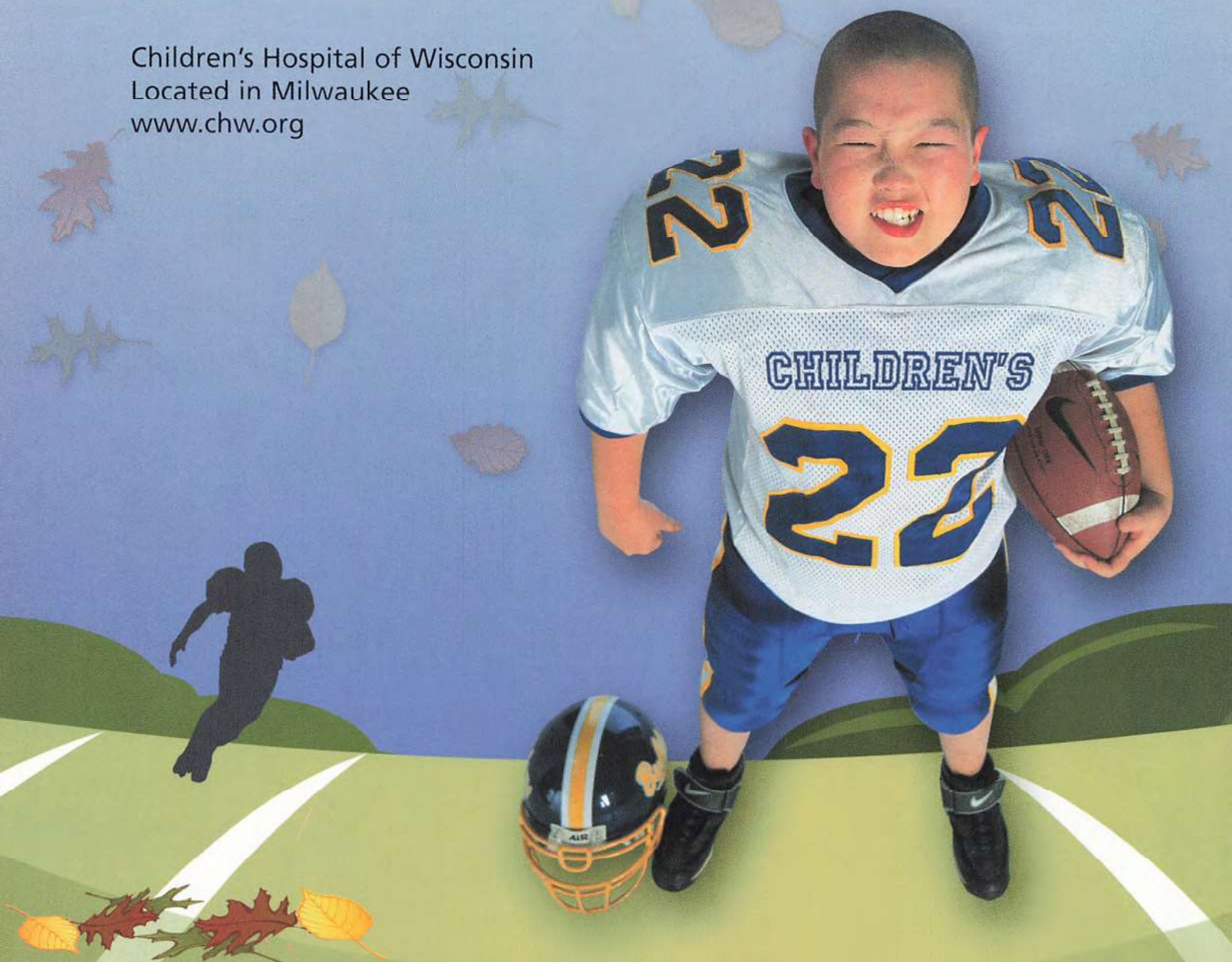


THE SUPER SEARCH

REGULAR SEASON

Fill in the answers to the following 16 questions about the NFL and the Super Bowl.

Super Bowl XLI MVP	M _ _ N _ _ G
Site of Super Bowl XLIII	T _ M _ _ B _ _
First Pick in 2007 NFL Draft	R _ S _ _ L _
2007 NFL Rushing Champion	T O _ _ _ N S _ _
Super Bowl XXX Winner	_ O _ B O _ _
2007 International Game Site	L _ _ D _ N
First to Win Three Super Bowls	_ _ E _ L _ R _
Cardinals' Original City	C _ _ C A _ _
Three-time Super Bowl MVP	_ O N _ A _ A
Pro Bowl City	H _ _ O L _ _ U
Division with Most Super Bowl Champs	N _ _ E _ _ _
NFL's First "Perfect" Team	_ _ L P _ _ N _
Returned Kickoff for TD in Super Bowl XLI	H _ S _ _ R
Snapped NFC's 13-year Super Bowl Win Streak	B _ _ N C _ _
This year's Super Bowl Number	X _ _ I
NFL's All-Time Reception Leader	_ I C _

PLAYOFF CHALLENGE

Now find the answers you listed above in this word search.

S M A N N I N G S O C T Y A U J H E R A
E C N M S O L A L E R V A F T T E R B E
G E E R A M L P Y S O L B B U N K R E D
R N S D S A E A H R A S A R T P E Z W A
U S M O I J S F I Q D A P I O Y H Q U W
N U N M R H S C C E R N M S A N G I T A
D P D P M R U W Y S A P A D R A C L Y T
A H E S T E R A G I X I T E Y F T O E Y
T R G A N E N Q O J D X L I I L Z N S L
S F I X E L D N A E O Z Y A D D E F O T
O C L C E U L S X A I F M M E E D S L S
G H H L E X N M H O N O L U L U P A Y A
A E O O P I O J S P E A N T X X L O M E
C L R L H F S D I P O M T C O A B S A C
I M V P I N N D L R P B E N D W I W D F
H W L X O L I N X Z C N I Z O B O E S N
C O A K S A L A O D O L K C A M J D W K
D D L W L L M L N O D N O L I O C S R E
L R E I A E O E P I G E N T P D N X O P
A G E A W R T D S N O O S T E E L E R S

SUPER BOWL BONUS

Look at the word search again to see if you can find the name of the NFL's career leader in touchdown passes.

Solution on page 283

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

GAMES

Most Games
6 – Mike Lodish, Buffalo, XXV-XXVIII; Denver, XXXII-XXXIII

Most Games, Winning Team
5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco, XXIII-XXIV; Dallas, XXVII-XXVIII, XXX

Most Games, Coach
6 – Don Shula, Baltimore, III; Miami, VI-VIII, XVII, XIX

Most Games, Winning Team, Coach
4 – Chuck Noll, Pittsburgh, IX-X, XIII-XIV

SCORING

Most Points, Career
48 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games (8 TD)

Most Points, Game
18 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX (3 TD);
Jerry Rice, San Fran. vs. Denver, XXIV (3 TD); vs. San Diego, XXIX (3 TD);
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX (3 TD);
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII (3 TD)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco. vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

Most PATs (Kicking), Career
13 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games

Most PATs (Kicking), Game
7 – Mike Cofer, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV;
Lin Elliott, Dallas vs. Buffalo, XXVII;
Doug Brien, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Two-Point Conversions, Game
1 – by four players, most recently by
Kevin Faulk, New England vs. Carolina, XXXVIII

Most Field Goals, Career
7 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games (10 attempts)

Most Field Goals, Game
4 – Don Chandler, Green Bay vs. Oakland, II;
Ray Wersching, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XVI

Longest Field Goal
54 – Steve Christie, Buffalo vs. Dallas, XXVIII

RUSHING

Most Attempts, Career
101 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Attempts, Game
38 – John Riggins, Washington vs. Miami, XVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
354 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
204 – Timmy Smith, Washington vs. Denver, XXII

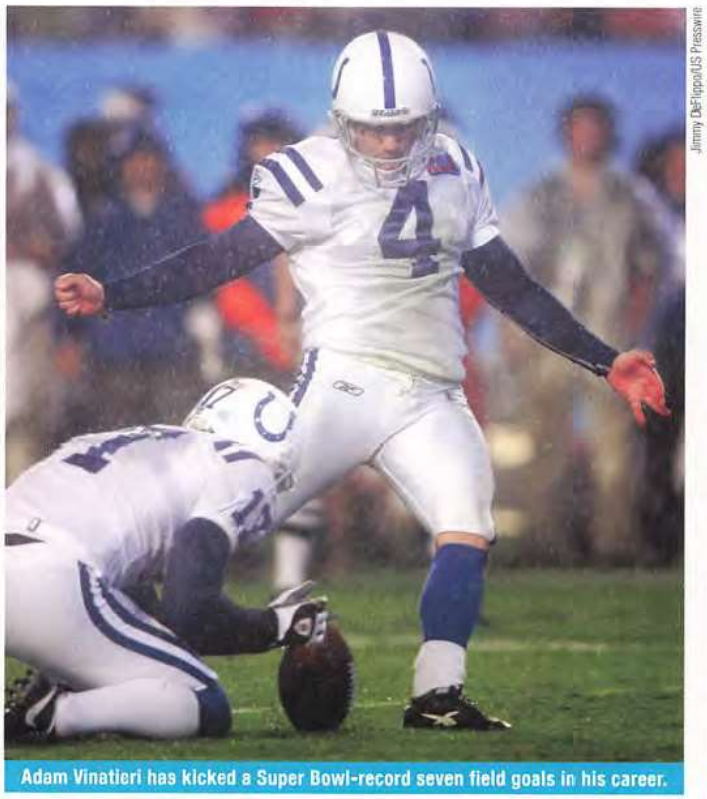
Longest Run From Scrimmage
75 – Willie Parker, Pittsburgh vs. Seattle, XL (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (20 attempts)
9.6 – Marcus Allen, L.A. Raiders, 1 game (20-191)

Highest Average Gain, Game (10 attempts)
10.5 – Tom Matte, Baltimore vs. N.Y. Jets, III (11-116)

Most Touchdowns, Career
5 – Emmitt Smith, Dallas, 3 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII


Jimmy DeFlippo/US Presswire

Adam Vinatieri has kicked a Super Bowl-record seven field goals in his career.

Al Messerschmidt/NFL Photos

Jerry Rice caught eight touchdown passes in four Super Bowl appearances.

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

PASSING

Highest Passer Rating, Career (40 attempts)
127.8 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Attempted, Career
152 – John Elway, Denver, 5 games

Most Passes Attempted, Game
58 – Jim Kelly, Buffalo vs. Washington, XXVI

Most Passes Completed, Career
83 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Completed, Game
32 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Carolina, XXXVIII

Most Consecutive Completions, Game
13 – Joe Montana, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV

Highest Completion Percentage, Career (40 attempts)
70.0 – Troy Aikman, Dallas, 3 games, (56-80)

Highest Completion Percentage, Game (20 attempts)
88.0 – Phil Simms, N.Y. Giants vs. Denver, XXI (22-25)

Most Yards Gained, Career
1,142 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
414 – Kurt Warner, St. Louis vs. Tennessee, XXXIV

Longest Pass Completion
85 – Jake Delhomme (to Muhsin Muhammad), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Most Touchdown Passes, Career
11 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Touchdown Passes, Game
6 – Steve Young, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Interceptions, Career
8 – John Elway, Denver, 5 games

Most Interceptions, Game
5 – Rich Gannon, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

RECEIVING

Most Receptions, Career
33 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Receptions, Game
11 – Dan Ross, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XVI; Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII; Deion Branch, New England vs. Philadelphia, XXXIX

Most Yards Gained, Career
589 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
215 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

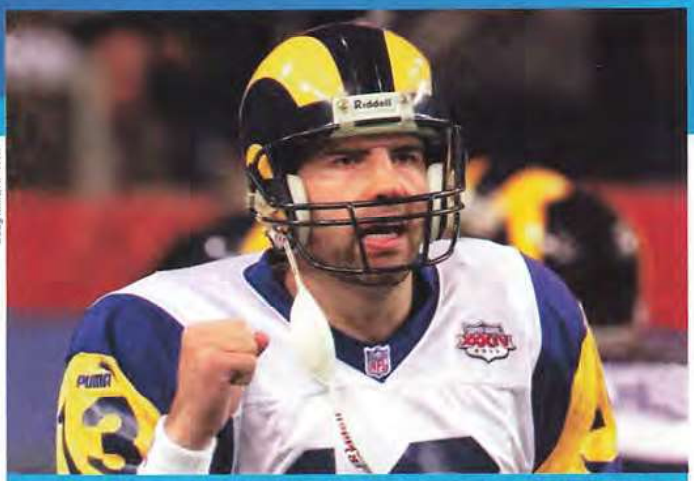
Longest Reception
85 – Muhsin Muhammad (from Jake Delhomme), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (8 receptions)
24.4 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh, 4 games (11-268)

Highest Average Gain, Game (3 receptions)
40.33 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh vs. Los Angeles, XIV (3-121)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX



Doug Mills/AP WWP

Kurt Warner threw for a record 414 yards in the Rams' Super Bowl XXXIV victory.

THE SUPER SEARCH SOLUTION FROM PAGE 281

REGULAR SEASON

Super Bowl XLI MVP	MANNING
Site of Super Bowl XLIII	TAMPA BAY
First Pick in 2007 NFL Draft	RUSSELL
2007 NFL Rushing Champion	TOMLINSON
Super Bowl XXX Winner	COWBOYS
2007 International Game Site	LONDON
First to Win Three Super Bowls	STEELERS
Cardinals' Original City	CHICAGO
Three-time Super Bowl MVP	MONTANA
Pro Bowl City	HONOLULU
Division with Most Super Bowl Champs	NFC EAST
NFL's First "Perfect" Team	DOLPHINS
Returned Kickoff for TD in Super Bowl XLI	HESTER
Snapped NFC's 13-year Super Bowl Win Streak	BRONCOS
This year's Super Bowl Number	XLII
NFL's All-Time Reception Leader	RICE

PLAYOFF CHALLENGE

S	M	A	N	N	I	N	G	S	O	C	T	Y	A	U	J	H	E	R	A
E	C	N	M	S	O	L	A	L	E	R	V	A	F	T	T	E	R	B	E
G	E	E	R	A	M	L	P	Y	S	O	L	B	B	U	N	K	R	E	D
R	N	S	D	S	A	E	A	H	R	A	S	A	R	T	P	E	Z	W	A
U	S	M	O	I	J	S	F	I	Q	D	A	P	I	O	Y	H	Q	U	W
N	U	N	M	R	H	S	C	C	E	R	N	M	S	A	N	G	I	T	A
D	P	D	P	M	R	U	W	Y	S	A	P	A	D	R	A	C	L	Y	T
A	H	E	S	T	E	R	A	G	I	X	I	T	E	Y	F	T	O	E	Y
T	R	G	A	N	E	N	Q	O	J	D	X	L	I	I	L	Z	N	S	L
S	F	I	X	E	L	D	N	A	E	O	Z	Y	A	D	D	E	F	O	T
O	C	L	C	E	U	L	S	X	A	I	F	M	M	E	E	D	S	L	S
G	H	H	L	E	X	N	M	H	O	N	O	L	U	L	U	P	A	Y	A
A	E	O	O	P	I	O	J	S	P	E	A	N	T	X	X	L	O	M	E
C	L	R	L	H	F	S	D	I	P	O	M	T	C	O	A	B	S	A	C
I	M	V	P	I	N	N	D	L	R	P	B	E	N	D	W	I	W	D	F
H	W	L	X	O	L	I	N	X	Z	C	N	I	Z	O	B	O	E	S	N
C	O	A	K	S	A	L	A	O	D	O	L	K	C	A	M	J	D	W	K
D	D	L	W	L	L	M	L	N	O	D	N	O	L	I	O	C	S	R	E
L	R	E	I	A	E	O	E	P	I	G	E	N	T	P	D	N	X	O	P
A	G	E	A	W	R	T	D	S	N	O	O	S	T	E	E	L	E	R	S

SUPER BOWL BONUS

BRETT FAVRE

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

KICKOFF RETURNS

Most Kickoff Returns, Career
10 – Ken Bell, Denver, 3 games

Most Kickoff Returns, Game
8 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX;
Marcus Knight, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
283 – Fulton Walker, Miami, 2 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
244 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX

Longest Return
99 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI (TD)

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
42.0 – Tim Dwight, Atlanta, 1 game (5-210)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
47.5 – Fulton Walker, Miami vs. Washington, XVII (4-190)

Most Touchdowns, Game
1 – by eight players, most recently by
Devin Hester, Chicago vs. Indianapolis, XLI

PUNT RETURNS

Most Punt Returns, Career
8 – Troy Brown, New England, 3 games

Most Punt Returns, Game
6 – Mike Nelms, Washington vs. Miami, XVII;
Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Most Yards Gained, Career
94 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games

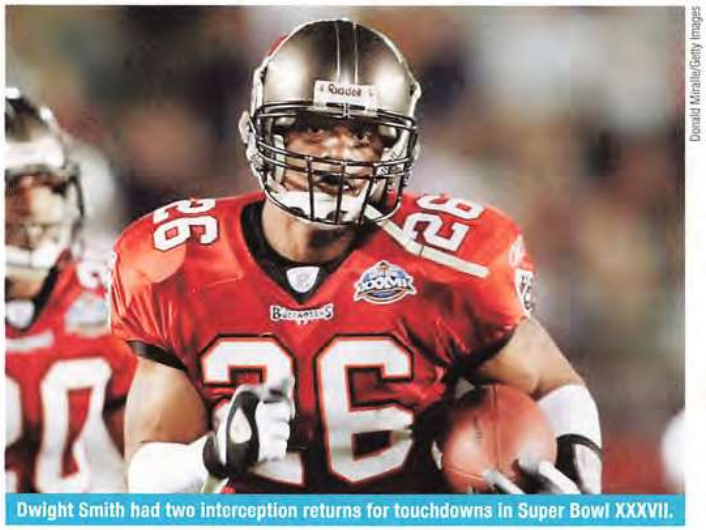
Most Yards Gained, Game
90 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Longest Return
45 – John Taylor, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
15.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games (6-94)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
18.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII (3-56)

Most Touchdowns, Game
None



Donald Miralle/Getty Images

Dwight Smith had two interception returns for touchdowns in Super Bowl XXXVII.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

Charles Haley owns Super Bowl records for victories (5) and career sacks (4.5).

PUNTING

Most Punts, Career
17 – Mike Eischeid, Oakland-Minnesota, 3 games;
Mike Horan, Denver-St. Louis, 4 games

Most Punts, Game
11 – Brad Maynard, N.Y. Giants vs. Baltimore, XXXV

Longest Punt
63 – Lee Johnson, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XXIII

Highest Average, Punting, Career (10 punts)
46.5 – Jerrel Wilson, Kansas City, 2 games (11-511)

Highest Average, Punting, Game (4 punts)
50.2 – Tom Rouen, Seattle vs. Pittsburgh, XL (6-301)

INTERCEPTIONS

Most Interceptions, Career
3 – Chuck Howley, Dallas, 2 games; Rod Martin, Oakland-L.A. Raiders, 2 games; Larry Brown, Dallas, 3 games

Most Interceptions, Game
3 – Rod Martin, Oakland vs. Philadelphia, XV

Most Yards Gained, Career
108 – Darrien Gordon, San Diego-Denver-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
108 – Darrien Gordon, Denver vs. Atlanta, XXXIII

Longest Return
76 – Kelly Herndon, Seattle vs. Pittsburgh, XL

Most Touchdowns, Game
2 – Dwight Smith, Tampa Bay vs. Oakland, XXXVII

SACKS

Most Sacks, Career
4.5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco-Dallas, 5 games

Most Sacks, Game
3.0 – Reggie White, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

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Stories Beyond the Stars

by Brian Kilmeade

Most of you watch the Super Bowl hoping to see the best team win. I root for the best story.

Not the best team story, mind you, but the best individual story.

That's because I believe many of life's lessons can be found in the journeys of those who compete at the highest level of sports. Look around at Super Bowl XLII and you're sure to find dozens of players with inspiring tales of triumph over difficult circumstances.

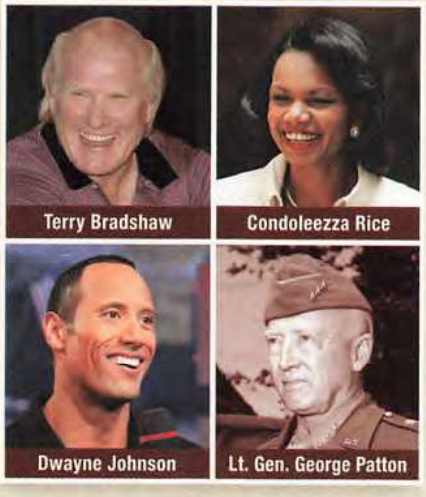
Over the last three years, I have interviewed athletes of all abilities for my books *The Games Do Count* and *It's How You Play the Game*. Many of those profiled are outstanding men who cut their teeth on the gridiron and credit it with their success in life. From Joe Montana to current Secretary of Treasury Hank Paulson, and from Burt Reynolds to Gerald Ford, they all played and strived for excellence and ultimately reached their goals.

Some reached those goals on the football field; others had their dreams delayed but in the end climbed to the top of their chosen professions. Dare I say, after more than 150 interviews, I have reached one conclusion about the Super Bowl: It doesn't matter who wins or loses; it's how you play and what you learn that counts.

Hear me out. Winning the Super Bowl *isn't* everything. Rather, one should focus on doing everything he can to get there and doing his best once he arrives. The final score will take care of itself. It's about understanding what's necessary to win, so that even if you don't, you can achieve success once the cheering stops.

Terry Bradshaw has reached the pinnacle of two professions, but not without struggle and self-doubt. The first pick in the 1970 NFL Draft, he was labeled a bust after his rookie year with the Steelers, when he threw just six touchdowns and was picked off 24 times. But he hung in there and improved each time he took the field until he became the game's best. Ultimately, Bradshaw won four Super Bowl titles and twice earned MVP honors. Now his bust resides in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

When Bradshaw first moved into the broadcast booth, he endured similar criticism. Again, it almost broke him, but the resolve he learned on the football field soon surfaced in front of the camera. Now he's known by millions of people not as a former player but as an actor, talk-show host, motivational speaker, and, of course, a dominant personality on FOX NFL Sunday.



Another great example is Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. He and Bradshaw have more in common than you might think. Before achieving major fame and fortune in pro wrestling and movies, "The Rock" experienced major disappointment as a football player at the University of Miami. He had endured numerous injuries in an attempt to crack the Hurricanes' starting lineup, but in the end not only didn't reach his dream of playing in the NFL but also got cut from the Canadian Football League.

Did he fail? Heck no. He tried, he worked hard, and he sacrificed, which were all essential to persevering through those small-town wrestling matches that would eventually take him to the heights of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and major movie-star status. Ironically, Johnson recently played a football star who wins the championship in his movie *The Game Plan*.

Such lessons are not limited to men, either, a point brought home by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. She learned about football from her father, who was a coach, and from age 4 until she went away to college, they watched games together. Even as provost at Stanford, Rice sat in on film sessions when the coaches studied upcoming opponents.

Her passion for football has continued to grow through the years, and as NFL stars John Lynch and Tiki Barber have told me, she *really* knows the game.

One final example: George Patton was a hard-nosed linebacker at West Point who barely cracked the team's lineup. Letters to his father show him despondent over not becoming the impact player he imagined. He tried, trained, and visualized, but it never came to pass. Was he a loser? Quite the opposite—General George S. Patton is an American icon and war hero who carried that "blood and guts" attitude honed in football to victory on the battlefield. Our world might be a very different place if he hadn't.

My message here is not geared to those who've made it to the big game, but those who didn't and won't. Try your best—put in the training, listen to your coach, and if it's the Super Bowl you want, then try to make it happen. But remember you can apply football's lessons to all aspects of your life. This country is full of people who've done just that.

In closing, if I had to pick the one Super Bowl moment that best symbolizes effort and passion, it would have to be the Bills' Don Beebe chasing down Leon Lett in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl XXVII, preventing a Cowboys touchdown even though his team already trailed by 40 points. Beebe played to the final whistle, which is what we all should do in everything we try.

Enjoy the game.

Brian Kilmeade is the author of The Games Do Count *and* It's How You Play the Game. *He co-hosts Fox News Channel's* Fox & Friends *and the* Brian and the Judge *show on Fox News Radio.*

Clockwise from top left: Jamie McCarthy/Wireimage/Getty Images; Bru Garcia/AFP/Getty Images; Time Life Pictures/Getty Images; Bryan Bedder/Getty Images

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Looking Ahead

NFL FANS ENJOY THE FUN ALL YEAR LONG!

PRO BOWL www.nfl.com/probowl

The Pro Bowl heads to Honolulu for the 29th straight year as the AFC All-Stars battle their NFC counterparts on Sunday, Feb. 10, at Aloha Stadium. NFL Network's *Total Access* show will air from Hawaii the entire week, and FOX Sports is televising the game live at 6 p.m. (ET). The 43-man AFC and NFC squads are selected by the consensus vote of players, coaches, and fans—the only league to use such a system. Last year, Cincinnati QB Carson Palmer threw for 190 yards and two touchdowns and was selected Most Outstanding Player of the AFC's 31-28 win. That result put the AFC ahead, 19-18, in the Pro Bowl series.

Jesse Bowman/US Presswire

Carson Palmer

HALL OF FAME www.profootballhof.com

Hall of Fame Weekend is set for Aug. 1-3 in Canton, Ohio. That's when the NFL's Hall of Fame Class of 2008 (announced the day before Super Bowl XLII) will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The weekend also includes the annual AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game—a tradition since 1962—at Fawcett Stadium. In last year's game, the Steelers defeated the Saints. For information on tickets and group packages to attend the festivities, call (888) 310-HALL or visit www.profootballhof.com.

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

NFL SCOUTING COMBINE www.nfl.com

Pro hopefuls will be in Indianapolis for the NFL Scouting Combine, and NFL fans can follow it all. NFL Network is the exclusive television home of the Scouting Combine, which takes place Feb. 20-26 at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis. With access to daily workouts, head coaches, front-office personnel, and players, NFL Network's coverage will give fans exclusive insights to how teams are preparing for the upcoming NFL Draft. In addition, the *Total Access* crew will be on the scene with news, analysis, and interviews all week.

NFL OPENING KICKOFF www.nfl.com/kickoff

The NFL's 89th season officially begins on Thursday, Sept. 4, with *NFL Opening Kickoff Live*. Continuing a tradition started in 2004, the celebration takes place at the home of the reigning Super Bowl champion and includes live entertainment followed by 2008's season opener. Among the performers at the 2007 NFL Kickoff celebration were John Mellencamp, Faith Hill, Kelly Clarkson, and Hinder. In the Kickoff Game, Reggie Wayne had two touchdown receptions as the host Indianapolis Colts defeated the New Orleans Saints, 41-10.

Jamie Squire/Getty Images

John Mellencamp

NFL DRAFT

www.nfl.com/draft

The 73rd NFL Draft is slated for April 26-27 at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. Fans will notice changes to this year's draft procedure—Day 1 starts at 3 p.m. and features the first and second rounds, while Day 2 commences at 11 a.m. with rounds 3-7. ESPN and NFL Network will televise the draft live, and fans can follow all the picks on www.nfl.com. Those interested in attending the draft can go to www.nfl.com for ticket information. Last year, the Raiders chose LSU's JaMarcus Russell with the first pick.

David Bergman/Corbis

Roger Goodell and JaMarcus Russell

SUPER BOWL XLIII www.superbowl.com

The Super Bowl is headed to Tampa for the fourth time when the 65,908-seat Raymond James Stadium hosts Super Bowl XLIII on Sunday, Feb. 1. The contest will be televised by NBC. A limited number of game tickets are available to the public through a random drawing. Requests are accepted starting Feb. 1, 2008, and must be sent via certified or registered mail. Send your request (limited to one per household) to:

Super Bowl Random Drawing

P.O. Box 49140, Strongsville, OH 44149-0140.

TRAINING CAMP

www.nfl.com/trainingcamp

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Matt York/AP WWP

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